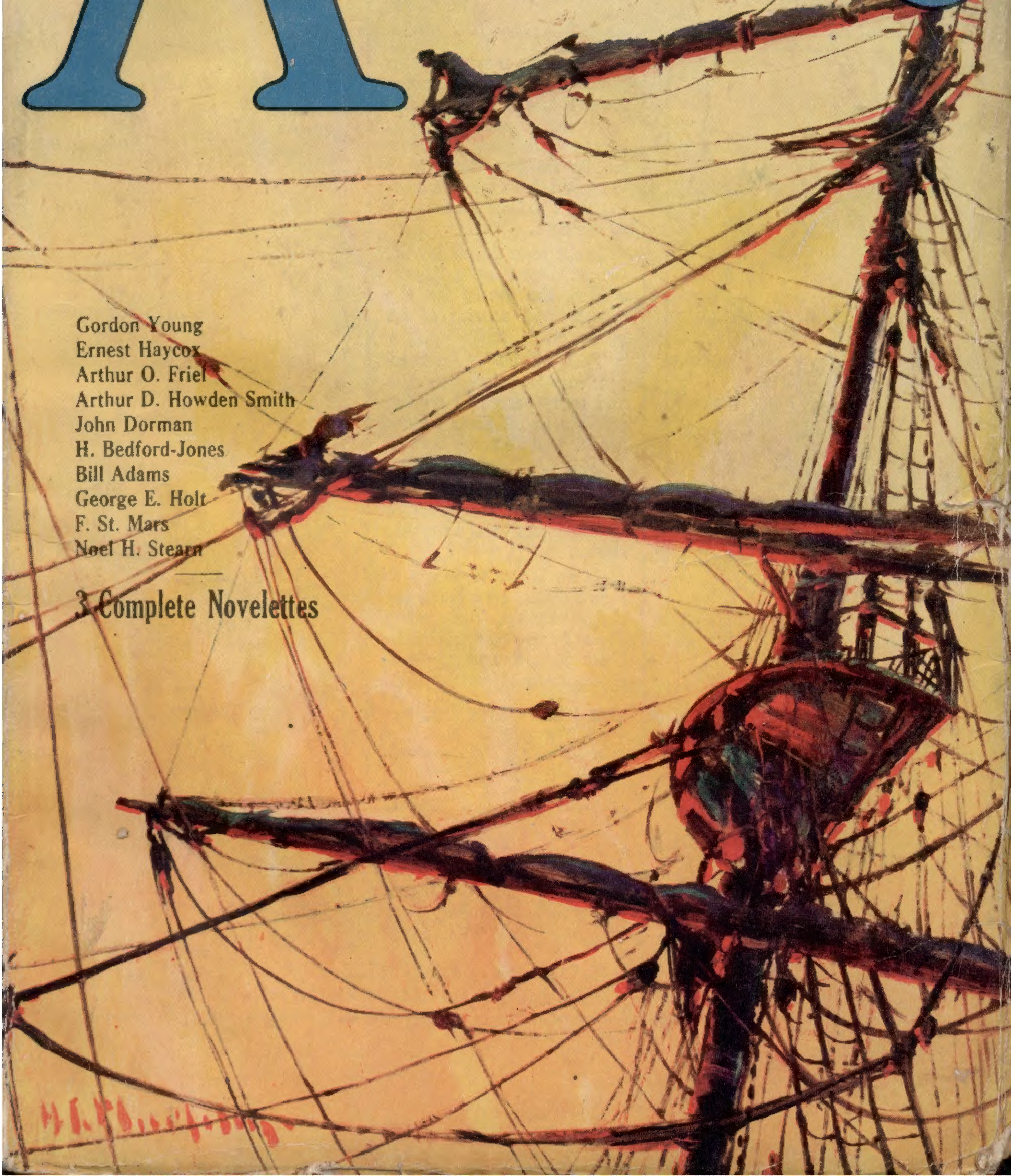
MAY
8th
1926
25c

PUBLISHED
TWICE A MONTH

Adventure



Gordon Young
Ernest Haycox
Arthur O. Friel
Arthur D. Howden Smith
John Dorman
H. Bedford-Jones
Bill Adams
George E. Holt
F. St. Mars
Noel H. Stearn

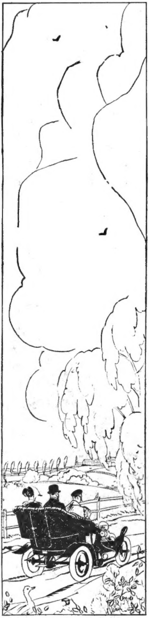
3 Complete Novelettes

MAY 8th ISSUE, 1926
VOL. LVIII No. 3

ADVENTURE

25 Cents

Along the byways of 1905 and the highways of 1926



IN NINETEEN HUNDRED AND FIVE, when the motor-car was usually the grotesque and terrifying toy of the rich, Prest-O-Lite gave the automobile its first dependable eyes, and there was less roaring home to beat the dangers of the dark.

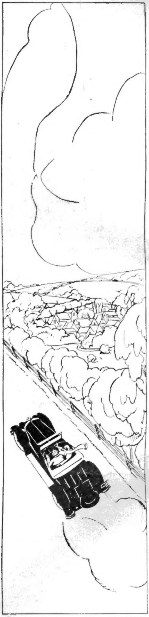
In the years that followed, Prest-O-Lite became known around the world for the quality and service of its products.

Today Prest-O-Lite Storage Batteries—for motor-cars and radio—are sold by the millions in all parts of the world, and all roads lead to Prest-O-Lite Service Stations.

The Prest-O-Lite sign marks "The Oldest Service to Motorists" and a capable dealer.

It is no longer necessary to take a chance on a battery of unknown make. You can buy Prest-O-Lite Automobile Batteries from $15.50 up—and Radio Batteries from $4.75 up.

THE PREST-O-LITE CO., INC.
INDIANAPOLIS, IND.
New York San Francisco
In Canada: Prest-O-Lite Company of Canada, Ltd., Toronto, Ontario



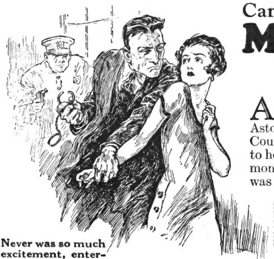
The oldest service to motorists

Prest-O-Lite

STORAGE BATTERIES FOR
MOTOR-CARS AND RADIO

Can this Beautiful Girl be the MONSTER?

What Mysterious Motives Inspired her Awful Deeds



Never was so much excitement, entertainment and education offered you for so little money!

A SHARP click and Cleek was on her like a leaping cat! "Caught you," he snarled. Astounded we stared at this gentle-looking girl. Could that soft hand of hers have sent five men to horrible deaths! Was this really the nameless monster who held whole cities in terror? What was her true identity?

And those terrible deeds—what was the awful motive in her heart? What connection had the crucifix over her bed with the mysterious symbols on the dead man's hand? What uncanny means did she employ that left no trace—stripped her victims of their identity and baffled the shrewdest detectives and physicians?

You can learn the answer to this amazing tale and a host of equally thrilling, exciting, gripping adventure stories by sending today for

The International ADVENTURE LIBRARY

(Bram Stoker—Conan Doyle—M. Leblanc—T. W. Hanshew—W. Camp)

A Master Selection of only the best works of the world's most famous mystery, romance and adventure Writers—offered you in one splendid set of 15 volumes at a bargain for quick action!

IN all literature you can find nothing equalling these fifteen volumes for weird mystery and adventure—nothing surpassing them in sensational romance—for here are not just good mystery and adventure stories by the world's most gifted authors—but their recognized greatest works!

World-wide is their sweep. With amazing swiftness you pass from one thrilling episode to another, from seething India to fanatical Morocco, from staid old England to the mysterious isles of the Pacific. One moment you are an Apache—the next the police agent himself—then your interest turns to the fair lady, for here are stories so well told you will delight in reading them over and over again.

If you are a lover of the finest literature and wish to possess the best, these titles will fire your imagination—*Dracula; Tales of Sherlock Holmes; Return of Sherlock Holmes; The Abandoned Room; Arsene Lupin; The Confessions of Arsene Lupin; The Teeth of the Tiger; The Crystal Stopper; The Hollow Needle; The Devil's Admiral; Cleek of Scotland Yard; Cleek, The Master Detective; The White Waterfall; The Unseen Hand; The Radium Terrors.*

Eleven long novels and fifty-three short stories by the world's greatest adventure writers: Sir A. Conan Doyle; Bram Stoker; Wadsworth Camp; Maurice Leblanc; Frederick Ferdinand Moore; Thomas W. Hanshew; Clarence H. New; Albert Dorrington—all yours at a bargain if you mail the coupon today.

Beautifully bound in rich-looking Maroon de Luxe Vellum with titles handsomely stamped in gold.

Priced for Quick Sale

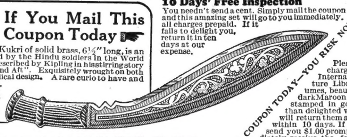
Only a limited number of these sets are left, and we have priced them especially low for quick sale; on easy payments, if you like. So to avoid disappointment, mail the coupon now.

10 Days' Free Inspection

You needn't send a cent. Simply mail the coupon and this amazing set will go to you immediately, all charges prepaid. If it fails to delight you, return it in ten days at our expense.

FREE If You Mail This Coupon Today ☞

This famous Gurkha Kukri of solid brass, 6½" long, is an exact replica of that used by the Hindu soldiers in the World War and so graphically described by Kipling in his stirring story "The Drums of the Fore and Aft". Exquisitely wrought on both sides in an ancient symbolical design. A rare curio to have and useful as a letter-opener, a paper-weight or a protection on occasion—but you must act today.



MAIL COUPON TODAY—YOU RISK NOTHING

4-26

Dept. 43A

W. R. Caldwell & Co.
30 Irving Pl.,
New York

Please send me all charges prepaid the International Adventure Library in 15 volumes, beautifully bound in dark Maroon de Luxe Vellum stamped in gold. If not more than delighted with the books I will return them at your expense within 10 days. If satisfied, I will send you $1.00 promptly, and immediately receive the famous Gurkha Kukri *free*, and will pay the balance at the rate of $1.00 a month for only 16 months.

Name..

Street...

City......................State.....................

Occupation.......................................

FOR CASH IN FULL SEND $15.95

W. R. Caldwell & Co., Dept. 43A 30 Irving Place, New York City

ADVENTURE
May 8th, 1926

Published twice a month by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Yearly subscription $4.00 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 1, 1910, at the post-office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

Volume 58
Number 3

Gone—that *all-in* feeling

Ills banished—glorious vitality regained—with one simple food

NOT a "cure-all," not a medicine in any sense—Fleischmann's Yeast is simply a remarkable fresh food.

The millions of tiny active yeast plants in every cake invigorate the whole system. They aid digestion—clear the skin—banish the poisons of constipation. Where cathartics give only temporary relief, yeast strengthens the intestinal muscles and makes them healthy and active. And day by day it releases new stores of energy.

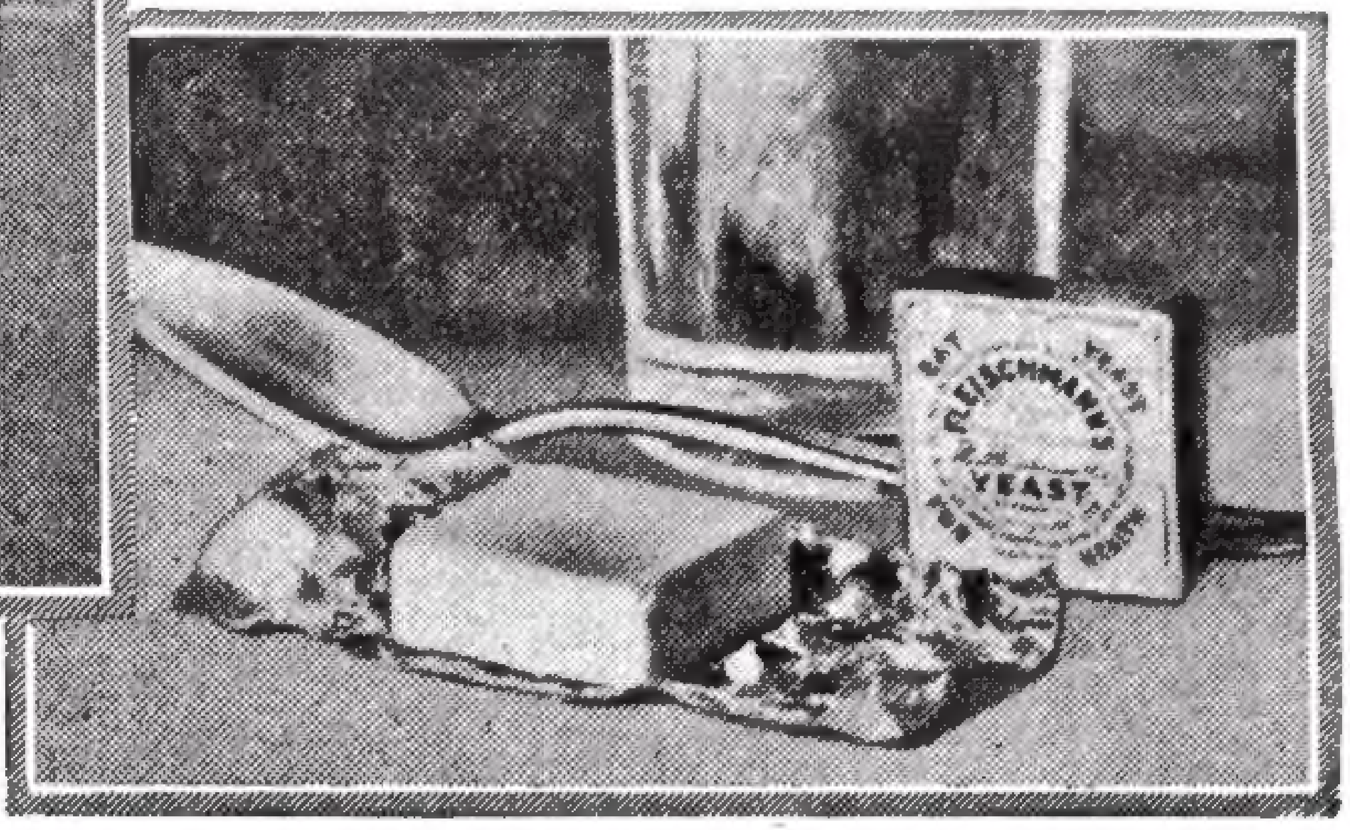
Eat two or three cakes regularly every day before meals: on crackers—in fruit juices, water or milk—or just plain, nibbled from the cake. *For constipation especially, dissolve one cake in hot water (not scalding) before breakfast and at bedtime.* Buy several cakes at a time—they will keep fresh in a cool dry place for two or three days. All grocers have Fleischmann's Yeast. Start eating it today!

Let us send you a free copy of our latest booklet on Yeast for Health. Health Research Dept. Z-28, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington Street, New York.

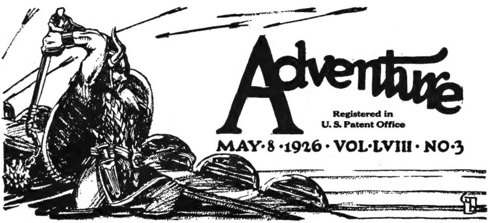
"I AM A GIRL OF SEVENTEEN. I began to get worried when my skin lost its freshness. I was desperate. One day in school a friend offered me one of her Fleischmann's Yeast sandwiches, which she told me were tasty and beneficial. I began to eat Yeast sandwiches. In two weeks I was feeling better; in about three my skin had regained its natural freshness. Now, I feel and look as a girl of seventeen should. The credit is all due to Fleischmann's Yeast."

ANNA WALDRON, Bloomfield, N. J.

"AFTER THE WORLD WAR, I returned home with health greatly impaired. I suffered from numerous ailments, including constipation. One day I saw Yeast cakes served in a restaurant. I decided to try them. I soon noticed I was getting back my appetite and my constipation was leaving me. I am now feeling fine." L. H. KLEEBER, St. Louis, Mo.



THIS FAMOUS FOOD tones up the entire system—aids digestion—clears the skin—banishes constipation.



Published Twice a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

J. H. GANNON, President
C. H. HOLMES, Secretary and Treasurer

Spring and Macdougal Streets - - New York, N. Y.
6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

Yearly Subscription, $4.00 in advance
Single Copy, Twenty-Five Cents

Foreign postage, $3.00 additional. Canadian postage, 50 cents.

Trade-Mark Registered; Copyright, 1926, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain. Entered at Stationers' Hall, London, England.

The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

Contents for May 8th, 1926, Issue

Fingerprints *A Complete Novelette* . . . . . . Gordon Young 1
San Francisco—trouble for *Don Everhard.*

Reveille *Wounded Man's Pleasure* . . . . . . Leonard H. Nason 51

The Apprentice Way . . . . Bill Adams 52
High Seas—all over a can of preserves.

Trial by Fire . . . . Ernest Haycox 61
Bunker Hill—the Tory doctor lost his friends.

The Origin of "Hash Marks" *Merit Stripes* . . . . Arthur Woodward 69

Son *A Complete Novelette* . . . . H. Bedford-Jones 70
From Mozambique Channel to Paris for a tiny leather bag.

Don Luis Entertains . . . . John Dorman 102
Mexican Border—the ranger picked up the beads.

I'll Be a Hardy Captain *Poem* . . . . Noel H. Stearn 106

A Manifest Destiny *A Five-Part Story Part III* . . . . Arthur D. Howden Smith 108
Nicaragua—General Walker resorts to the mailed fist.

**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from preceding page)

Gifts of Allah . . . . **George E. Holt** 142
Tangier—from beggar to basha.

The Marauders . . . . **F. St. Mars** 146
English Countryside—no man killed those minks.

Justice ***A Complete Novelette*** . . . . **Arthur O. Friel** 150
Orinoco Valley—*Jorge Padillo* could not hold back the plague.

Cajun Travelers *Ways and Means* . . . . . **Nevil Henshaw** 179

The Camp-Fire **A free-to-all meeting-place for readers, writers and adventurers** 180

Camp-Fire Stations 185

Old Songs That Men Have Sung 185

Various Practical Services Free to Any Reader 185

Ask Adventure 186
A free question and answer service bureau of information on outdoor life and activities everywhere. Comprising seventy-four geographical sub-divisions, with special sections on Radio, Mining and Prospecting, Weapons, Fishing, Forestry, Aviation, Army Matters, North American Anthropology, Health on the Trail, Herpetology, Railroading and Entomology.

Lost Trails 191

The Trail Ahead 192

Headings . . . . **W. J. Baumhofer**

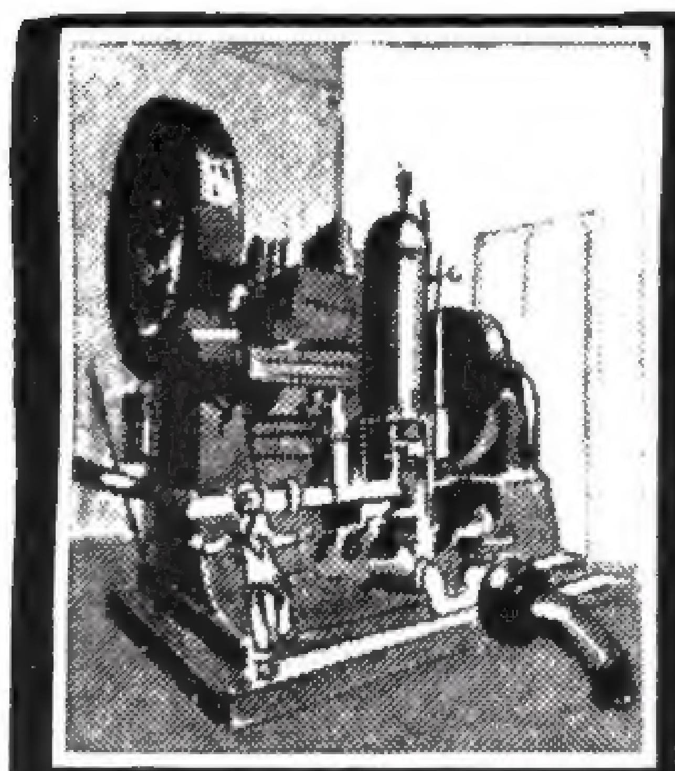
Cover Design . . . . **H. C. Murphy**

Three Complete Novelettes

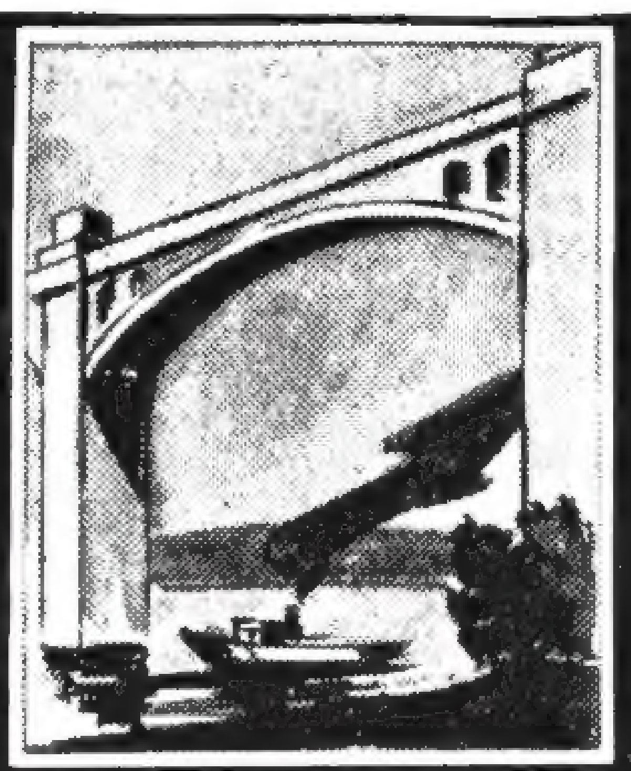
THE lips of the giant boa spoke no Spanish—yet there were things whispered by its mouth that settled the suspicions of the mate of the *Maggie May*. "THE PEARLS OF LA PAZ," a complete novelette by William P. Baron, will appear in the next issue.

NO BIRD in the world could have carried *Amada* to the top of the tree in that time. What, then, signified the hoarse call of the bird and the black tail-feather? "THE SUN-CROWS," a novelette by Sydney Herschel Small, will appear complete in the next issue.

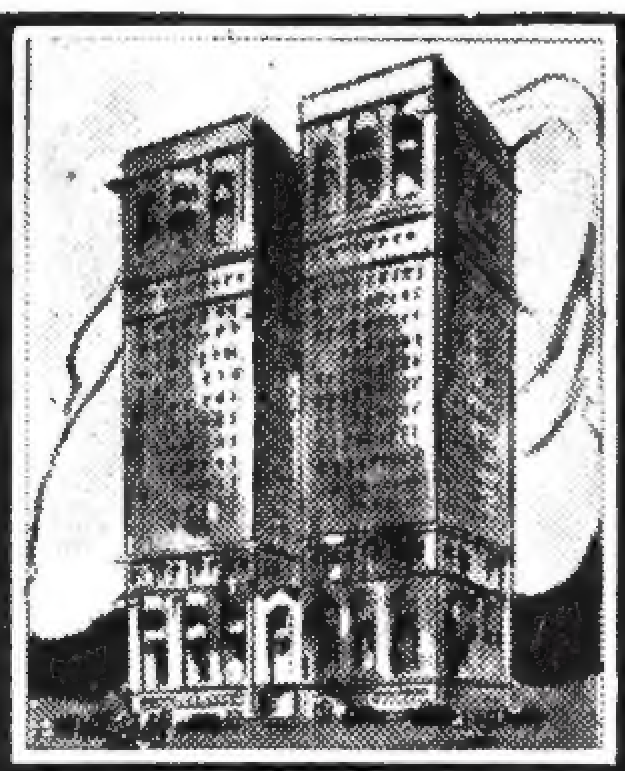
THE court of inquiry apparently found the commander guilty of hazarding his ship and the lives of his crew—but that was not the whole story. "MADCAP'S MOMENT," a complete novelette by Charles Victor Fischer, will appear in the next issue.



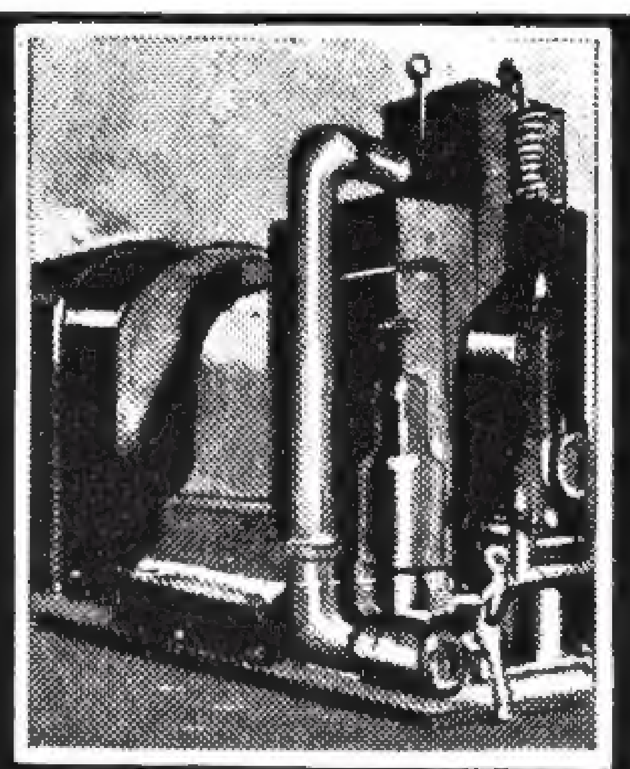
Be a Machine Draftsman—earn $60 to $150 a week



Be a Structural Draftsman—earn $60 to $200 a week



Be an Architectural Draftsman—earn $60 to $150 a week



Be an Electrical Draftsman—earn $60 to $125 a week

Be an Auto Draftsman—earn $60 to $125 a week

3 Drafting Lessons Actually FREE!

to prove you can LEARN AT HOME, IN YOUR SPARE TIME!

We have invented a new, simplified way to teach Drafting—the first real improvement in Drafting home-instruction in history. We want you to see it, try it—without one penny of cost or obligation. We want to show you how we get away from the **copying** methods used in the past. See how we make you **think**, solve problems, do actual drafting room jobs **from the first lesson!**

Draftsmen Wanted $60 to $200 a week!

MAIL COUPON TODAY!

FREE Job Service

Our employment department will help place you in a good job. Demand exceeds the supply. No charge for nation-wide employment service. Read want-ads for Draftsmen every day in Chicago Tribune or any big city paper—see the opportunities for yourself — **and get ready for them.**

70,000 fine jobs advertised this year. Get ready to fill one. Get out of the rut. Make something of yourself. Plan your future in Drafting. Even if you have only common schooling, even if you know nothing of Drafting, we guarantee to make you a real Draftsman **or to refund your money!** Special surprise offer right now to the first 500 men who answer this ad—reduced price, easy terms. Coupon brings complete information.

A New, Rapid, Easier Training

Copying drafting lessons prepares you to be only a "tracer." This new "Job-Method" gives you actual drafting-room jobs in a new one-step-at-a-time way. With **pictures** which you can understand almost without reading the "lessons." And that is why American School-trained Draftsmen can qualify for a good job at big pay when they graduate.

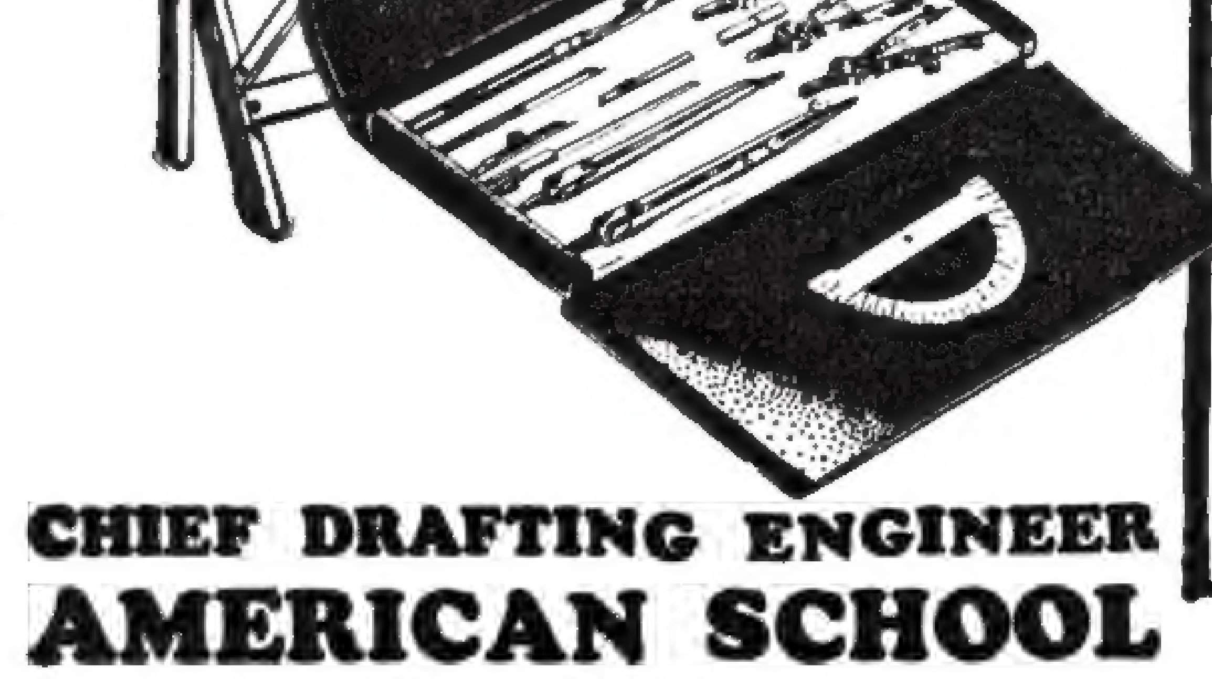
Win Success Through Drafting

Drafting is easy, fascinating work. Short hours. Big pay. And the Draftsman is always in line for promotion for executive positions. This training is **Complete.** It includes high-school subjects (if you need them) and all the Engineering and Mathematics required of Drafting Experts.

Coupon Brings Three Lessons Free!

Get them. Test your own ability to learn Drafting and get ready for a fine job and big pay. Coupon also brings surprise offer, and complete information about your opportunities for success in Drafting.

Mail It Today!



Complete Costly Drafting Outfit GIVEN!

You need a fine outfit like this to do precise, neat Drafting. Not one penny of extra charge for this complete, valuable, high grade outfit. Imported instruments. Table, board, mahogany-edge T square, triangles, ink, thumbtacks, etc., everything you will need. Retail value $20. Coupon brings this Free Offer.

CHIEF DRAFTING ENGINEER
AMERICAN SCHOOL
Dept. D-44
Drexel Ave. & 58th St., CHICAGO

CHIEF DRAFTING ENGINEER,
AMERICAN SCHOOL,
Dept. D-44, Drexel Ave. & 58th St., Chicago

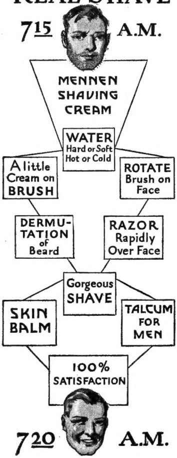
Rush 3 Free Drafting Lessons, Surprise offer, complete information, money-back guarantee, etc., to prove I can become a real draftsman at home in spare time

Name ....

Street No. ....

City .... *State* ....

CHART OF A REAL SHAVE



AN efficiency man said to me once, "Only when a method is *right*, can you chart it."

Three million men know that a Mennen Shave is right, chart or no chart.

Mennen's gives the same amazing results with any kind of water, hot or cold, hard or soft. A small amount of cream will hold such an enormous amount of water that it's economical.

Dermutation—the scientific way to master a beard, softens it so that it yields to the razor without a twitch.

Then the tingling, peppy zip of Skin Balm, cooling, refreshing, wonderfully good for the skin.

And finally, a velvety film of Talcum for Men that is antiseptic, protecting to sensitive skin and doesn't show because it is skin color.

All this co-ordinated shaving efficiency concentrated in just a few minutes of absolutely satisfying, convincing operation....Try the Complete Mennen Shave.

Jim Henry
(Mennen Salesman)

Play the HAWAIIAN GUITAR Just as the Natives Do

FREE when you enroll $15 HAWAIIAN GUITAR and Case

Only 4 Motions used in playing this fascinating instrument. Our native Hawaiian instructors teach you to master them quickly. Pictures show how. Everything explained clearly.

Play in Half Hour
After you get the four easy motions you play harmonious chords with very little practice. No previous musical knowledge necessary.

Easy Lessons
Even if you don't know one note from another, the 52 printed lessons and the clear pictures make it easy to learn quickly. Pay as you play.

Free Guitar
and Outfit in Genuine Seal Grain Fabrikoid Case as soon as you enroll. Nothing to buy—everything furnished. No delay.

Write at Once
You'll never be lonesome with this beautiful Hawaiian Guitar. Write for Special Offer and easy terms. A postcard will do. ACT!

FIRST HAWAIIAN CONSERVATORY of MUSIC, Inc.
9th Floor, Woolworth Bldg., Dept. 34, New York, N. Y.
Approved as a Correspondence School Under the Laws of the State of New York

What Is Your Spare Time Worth to You ?

"Really, I have never given it a thought," you will probably say.

That is because you don't know of the hundreds of *Adventure* Sales-Agents throughout the country who are making money hand over fist by securing new subscribers.

We have an easy money-making plan whereby you can make your spare time most valuable. Mail the coupon at once, and be the first in your community to build up a spare-time business!

A Part-Time Business, But Full-Time Pay!

—————— MAIL THIS TODAY ——————

Box 5050, ADVENTURE
Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City

Please send me at once, without obligation, full particulars of your easy money-making plan.

Name ....

Address ....

City .... **State** ....

LEARN THE AUTO TRADE

No schooling required. We teach by practical shop methods with tools on equipment. No text-books. Thousands of trained auto mechanics wanted. I pay your Railroad Fare myself. **8 Weeks Training** all you need. Course includes autos, tractors, gas engines, batteries, garage management, salesmanship, etc. Write quick for big **Free Auto Book and SPECIAL Tuition OFFER** **Earn $75 Weekly**

McSweeny Auto, Tractor & Electrical Shops
Chicago, Ill. Dept. 4917-E. Cincinnati, Ohio

As *it should be*

SINCE its extra cost, when spread over its billions of output, figures to but three cents per package of twenty, it is quite fair to say that Fatima, in between 'costly' and 'popular' in price, is decidedly more popular than costly

FATIMA

"What a whale of a difference just a few cents make"

LIGGETT & MYERS TOBACCO CO.

Your Choice $1.00 DOWN

Select NOW!

Prompt Delivery—No Red Tape!

Simply pin $1 to this ad and put it in an envelope with your name and address—mail it TODAY. We'll open a charge account for you and your choice of these special bargains will come Prepaid, for your approval and 15 Day Trial. If satisfied, pay balance in 10 equal monthly payments. Otherwise return, and your $1 will be refunded.

WE TRUST YOU

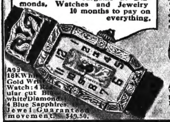
Your credit is good with us. Our Charge Account System is simple, easy and convenient. TRANSACTIONS CONFIDENTIAL. ORDER NOW.

Free Complete booklet with 3,000 bargains in Diamonds, Watches and Jewelry 10 months to pay on everything.

A75—Ladies 18K White Gold Ring; 3 AA1 Quality blue-white Diamonds. Regular $50 value. Price $42.50.

A76—Ladies 18K White Gold Floral and Scroll design. AA1 blue-white diamond and regular-cut diamond on each side of shank. $52.

A77—Gents heavy 18K White Gold ring. 2 blue-white Diamonds; 1 Blue Sapphire. $57.50.



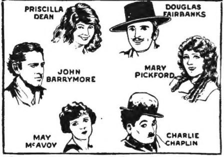
A99
18KWhi
Gold Wri
Watch; 4 R
ular cut Bl
whiteDiamonds.
4 Blue Sapphires.
Jewel Guaranteed
movement. $49.50.

AUTHORIZED CAPITAL $1,000,000.

L·W·SWEET INC.

986-J-1660 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

WIN $1000 Quick and Easy



Put Each Movie Star In a Separate Room

By drawing 3 straight lines, you can put each of these 6 Movie Stars in a separate Room. Then cut out this Advertisement and send it to us right away with your Name and complete Address. We'll immediately credit you with 100 "Points" and tell you how easy it is to secure the additional "Points" to make you the winner of the $1,000. This Contest closes May 15, 1926. Duplicate Prizes will be awarded in case of a tie.

Send No Money

Just your Solution and your full Name and complete Address. Enter this Contest to win! Your chance is as good as anybody's! Think what you can do with $1,000 cash! There is no time to lose! Quick action can bring you $100 Extra. Send your Solution NOW!

Peerless Pen Corporation

600-630 S. Dearborn St. Dept 143 Chicago

Turn Yearnings Into Earnings

Haven't you often thought of all the worth-while things you could have with extra money? Better clothes, new furniture, a radio, money for that trip you plan for next summer—a hundred and one yearnings could be realized with just a few more dollars a week.

We Show You How

Without experience, without capital, with only a few spare hours a week, you can earn the extra money you have long desired. Let us show you how to make $1.00 an hour and more by starting an *Adventure* subscription business in your neighborhood. We have 3 other popular magazines too, each one a dollar-winner.

——————Clip and Mail——————

Box 5051, ADVENTURE,
Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City, N. Y.

What is your offer? This does not obligate me in any way.

Name..

Street..

City......................State................

This Coupon Will Start You

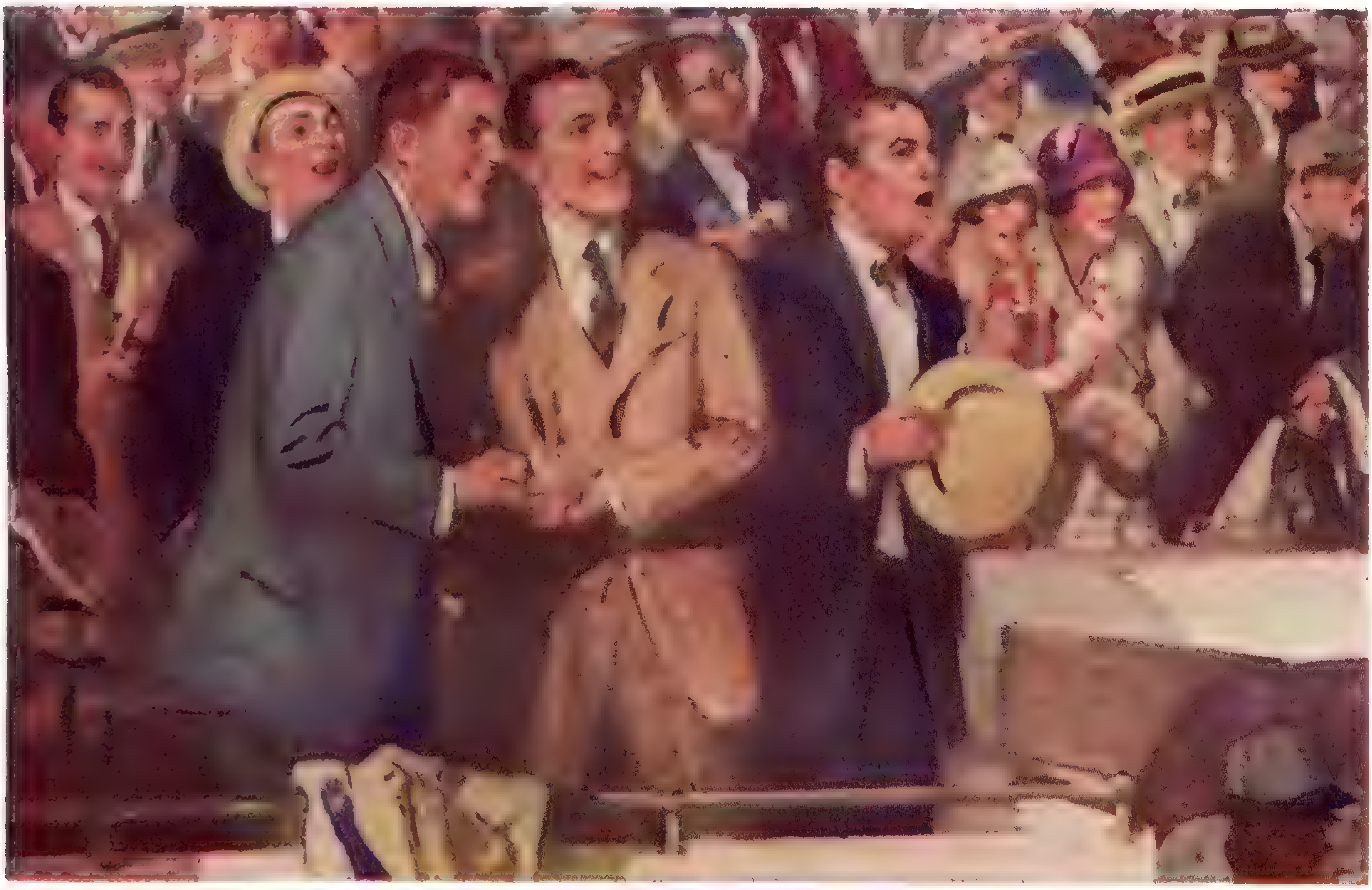
Merely write your name and address on the coupon to the left and complete information will be sent to you.

You Owe It To Yourself To Get The Facts. No Obligation.

Buy two at a time—use alternately.

Pro-phy-lac-tic
REG. IN U.S. PAT. OFF.

When you and spring are thrilling to the first ball game of the year —and your favorite player drives out a homer —have a Camel!



Camels contain the very choicest tobaccos grown in all the world. Camels are blended by the world's most expert blenders. In the making of this one brand we concentrate the tobacco knowledge and skill of the largest organization of tobacco experts in the world. No other cigarette made is like Camels. They are the overwhelming choice of experienced smokers.

CAMEL
TURKISH & DOMESTIC BLEND CIGARETTES

Our highest wish, if you do not yet know Camel quality, is that you try them. We invite you to compare Camels with any other cigarette made at any price.

R. J. Reynolds Tobacco
Company
Winston-Salem, N. C.

© 1926

"I love the fragrance of good pipe tobacco"

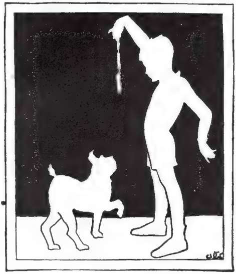
Julia Hoyt

FRESH
Tuxedo
TOBACCO
fresh from the factory
fresh
WHEREVER YOU GET IT
SMOKING TOBACCO
It's good and fragrant — and always

Quality created the demand — Demand made possible the price

NOW 12¢

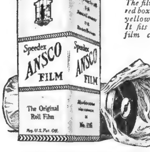
© Guaranteed by
The American Tobacco Co.
INCORPORATED



that future president in your home—*take his picture!*

Before long he will slip out of your arms and arrive at Man's estate. His world of today, filled with boyish laughter and enthusiasm, will be just a fading memory unless you hold it forever—with Ansco Pictures.

Let the new Ansco Speedex Film catch that characteristic pose or fleeting expression. It's the film that's made for inexperienced folks to get just the pictures they want.

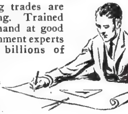


The film in the red box with the yellow band. It fits all roll film cameras.

ANSCO — Binghamton, N. Y.

BUILDING TRADES NEED TRAINED MEN

Thousands of good positions at good salaries



THE building trades are still booming. Trained men are in demand at good salaries. Government experts estimate that billions of dollars will be spent for construction this year.

To-day the most vital need of this great building program is men—*trained men*—men who can step right in and do the skilled work that building construction requires.

There is a simple, easy, practical way by which you can prepare for a better position, at a bigger salary. You can do it right at home, in spare time, no matter where you live, through the International Correspondence Schools.

A recent investigation of 13,298 students enrolled in I. C. S. Building Trades Courses showed that 1921 had become Architects; 246 had become Designers; 494 had become Chief Draftsmen; 2827 had become Draftsmen; 1845 had become Contractors; 211 had become Assistant Foremen; 4030 had become Foremen; 2354 had become Superintendents.

You, too, can have the position you want in the work you like best; an income that will give you and your family the home, the comforts, the luxuries you would like them to have. No matter what your age, present occupation, or your means, you can do it!

All we ask is the chance to prove it. That's fair, isn't it? Then, mark and mail this coupon.

TEAR OUT HERE

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

BOX 2030-E SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, *before* which I mark X.

☐ ARCHITECT
☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Building Foreman
☐ Concrete Builder
☐ Structural Engineer
☐ Structural Draftsman
☐ Plumber and Steam Fitter
☐ Heating and Ventilation
☐ Plumbing Inspector
☐ Foreman Plumber
☐ Sheet Metal Worker
☐ CIVIL ENGINEER
☐ Surveying and Mapping
☐ Reading Architects' Blue Prints
☐ ELECTRICAL ENGINEER
☐ Electric Lighting and Rys.
☐ Electric Wiring
☐ Telegraph Engineer
☐ Telephone Work
☐ MECHANICAL ENGINEER
☐ Mechanical Draftsman
☐ Toolmaker
☐ Machine Shop Practice
☐ CHEMIST
☐ Pharmacy
☐ Navigation
☐ SALESMANSHIP
☐ ADVERTISING
☐ Window Trimmer
☐ Show Card and Sign Painting
☐ BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
☐ Private Secretary
☐ Business Correspondent
☐ BOOKKEEPER
☐ Stenographer and Typist
☐ Higher Accounting
☐ COMMERCIAL LAW
☐ Common School Subjects
☐ Mathematics
☐ GOOD ENGLISH
☐ ILLUSTRATING
☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ CIVIL SERVICE
☐ Mining Engineer
☐ Gas Engine Operating
☐ STATIONARY ENGINEER
☐ Textile Overseer or Supt.
☐ TRAFFIC MANAGER
☐ AUTOMOBILES
☐ AGRICULTURE
☐ Poultry Raising
☐ French
☐ Spanish
☐ Banking

Name____________________

3-6-24

Present Occupation__________ Business Address__________

Street and No.____________________

City__________ State__________

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada.

Beatrix as she is conceived by the English artist, Hugh Thomson.

The Golden Book Magazine

Dangerous Reading

ANATOLE FRANCE was a writer unsurpassed in modern times. He says the beginning of education is being interested. You can't learn when you are bored. Hasn't your own experience taught you that?

How many people hate works of genius today because they were forced down their throats at a time when they found them dull? How many really great books and plays have been eternally spoiled for you because you were bored by them and had to read them at school, or from a sense of duty?

The truth is, whether a story was written last week or a hundred years ago—whether it is by a "classic" author or a widely-heralded best seller—*if it is dull* it is dangerous reading for the man and woman who has discovered what education means.

When you have laughed, wept or thrilled over one short story that is really good; when you have been absorbed in one truly moving book; when you have sensed life a little more keenly because of the winged words of one vivid poem, you have contributed more to your education than a man has received from scores of impressive volumes read from a sense of duty.

That is why The Golden Book makes such an appeal to the reader who demands something interesting and at the same time enduring. From the vast storehouse of the world's classics, written perhaps this year, perhaps thousands of years ago, each month it offers you those great stories, poems, plays and adventures that remain great because they are alive today.

As the telephone, the automobile and the radio enable you to live more richly, this new and delightful magazine has been inspired by the modern spirit to give you the pure gold that genius has mined. From all countries and all times it brings you adventures into literature.

The charm of The Golden Book is like the charm of an exquisite bouquet, of a delightful meal—just the right selections relative to you and to each other. It is that indefinable thing—the personality of The Golden Book—that has brought in one year 200,000 devoted readers. It is really edited.

How Would You Enjoy *a* Lunch *with* Beatrix Esmond?

Beautiful Beatrix, immortal in fascination, irresistible in mysterious feminine appeal—with a touch of the devil. If she came to your town, would you invite her to lunch, if you had the chance?

Of course you would, and that luncheon would be history in your life, for Beatrix, Thackeray's heroine, is one of the most tantalizing women ever created.

Beatrix is not alone. There are dozens of these exciting women waiting for you.

You feel their presence in the room with you—electric, intoxicating. As if by magic they step out of the pages that hold them, to you. They are as alive as the girl you noticed on the street today. Hundreds of men have fallen in love with them.

You don't seek out the commonplace girl in real life. If women interest and delight you, don't be content with pale, dull heroines who are only imitations of the colorful great ones.

That is the endless pleasure of The Golden Book. There you are always sure of meeting the most wonderful women who ever sent a man's heart pounding. From all countries and all times are the women it would thrill you most to know. Meet them in The Golden Book.

Among the contributors to the April Issue are:

- W. Somerset Maugham
- Georges Clemenceau
- Stewart Edward White
- Joseph C. Lincoln
- Stacy Aumonier
- Robert L. Stevenson
- James Stephens
- O. Henry
- Lafcadio Hearn
- Baudelaire
- Lewis Carroll
- Thomas Hardy

Special Offer for Readers with 20th Century Minds

Everyone who loves books that are interesting will see at once the dazzling possibilities of such a magazine.

In order that you may know yourself how stimulating The Golden Book can be, we have decided—*for a little while only*—to make a special offer to new subscribers. The regular price of The Golden Book is twenty-five cents a copy. We are going to send you two issues at our expense, and this is how. If you act at once we will give you The Golden Book for six months for $1.00 instead of $1.50. But—this is only for prompt action.

Only One Prompt Dollar

Simply fill out the attached coupon and mail it to us today. Do it now, while you are looking at it. This is only a temporary introductory offer to new subscribers. We cannot offer it long. We do not promise ever to make it again. Sooner or later you are going to become enthusiastic about The Golden Book if you enjoy reading fascinating stories. Send the coupon at once and be glad. Do not wait and be sorry.

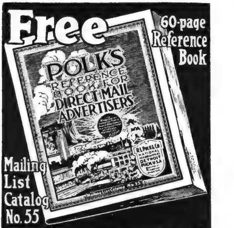
A 1 5-26

Introductory Offer
6 Months for $1

THE GOLDEN BOOK MAGAZINE
55 Fifth Ave., New York

Send The Golden Book to the address below at Special Introductory offer, six months. I enclose $1—instead of the usual $1.50.

Name......................................
Street......................................
City......................................


Free
60-page Reference Book
POLK'S REFERENCE BOOK FOR DIRECT MAIL ADVERTISERS
Mailing List Catalog No. 55

Get Business by Mail

60 pages of vital business facts and figures. Who, where and how many your prospects are. 8,000 lines of business covered. Compiled by the Largest Directory Publishers in the world, thru information obtained by actual door-to-door canvass.

Write for your FREE copy.

R. L. POLK & CO., Detroit, Mich.
671 POLK DIRECTORY BLDG.
Branches in principal cities of U. S.

You Can Play It —

If It's a Buescher Saxophone

We give 3 free lessons with each new instrument. They start you. Teach yourself. It's great fun practicing because you learn so quickly. Even though you have failed with some other instrument, you *can* learn the Buescher Saxophone. And it will make you the most popular person in your set. 6 days' free trial in your own home, any instrument. No obligations. Easy terms if you decide to buy. Send now for beautiful free literature A postal brings liberal proposition. Address:

Buescher Band Instrument Co. (5 x)
1394 Buescher Block **Elkhart, Indiana**

TRAVEL— PRACTICALLY YOUR OWN BOSS EARN up to $60 Per wk.

Fascinating Railway Work

TRAFFIC Inspectors travel near home or about the country; report confidentially to chief executives, opening way to fine advancements.

Due to contacts with many railways, we place graduates to earn at start $28 to $40 weekly, expenses paid, or refund tuition. Pay increases fast—up to $250 monthly—with experience.

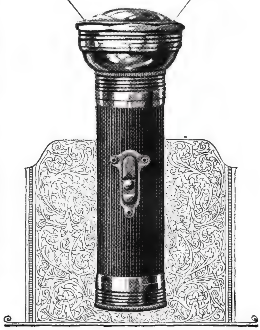
The *only* training-school of its kind. Easy, spare-time, home course quickly completed; inexpensive; terms given. Write for FREE Booklet No. D-89.

Standard Business Training Inst.,
Buffalo, N. Y.

MORE MEN WANTED To Fill Positions

8th YEAR

BURGESS
FLASHLIGHTS &
BATTERIES



SOMETHING to remember is that any good flashlight case practically never wears out. Filled with a Burgess Flashlight Battery, you have done about all that you can to insure yourself against the inconvenience and danger always present in darkness.

Burgess Flashlight Uni-Cels will fit any case you may have. Try them—no better batteries are made.

A Laboratory Product

BURGESS BATTERY COMPANY
GENERAL SALES OFFICE: CHICAGO
Canadian Factories and Offices:
Niagara Falls and Winnipeg

BURGESS UNI-CEL NO. 2
BURGESS
BURGESS UNI-CEL NO. 2

W A I T

!

—*before you eat another mouthful!*

Do you know all about your digestive tract? Are you eating the right amount of fruits, vegetables, meat, water, etc.? What about sweets—what happens when you eat too many? What foods leave the stomach quickly; what foods stay? When you know and observe these facts you will enjoy better health than you have ever known! Where will you get this information? In

The New BUTTERICK COOK BOOK

A very wonderful book in which you find an answer to every possible question on food.

Some Well-Balanced Menus in The New Butterick Cook Book

Breakfast	*Luncheon*	*Dinner*
SLICED PEACHES HAM OMELET GRAHAM BISCUITS COFFEE MILK	SPAGHETTI WITH TOMATO SAUCE WALDORF SALAD BROWN BREAD SANDWICHES MILK TEA	BROILED STEAK MASHED POTATOES ASPARAGUS SALAD ROLLS BUTTER GRAPE CONSERVE CHOCOLATE PUDDING

The New Butterick Cook Book

Was revised, enlarged and the recipes tested under the direction of Martha Van Rensselaer and Flora Rose, directors of the New York State College of Home Economics at Cornell University. Miss Van Rensselaer is Editor of the Home-Making Department of The Delineator.

***The New* BUTTERICK COOK BOOK**
Simple as a primer; complete as an encyclopedia

ON SALE AT ALL BOOKSTORES AND BUTTERICK PATTERN COUNTERS OR—SEND DIRECT

Clip This Coupon, Mail TO-DAY!

Butterick Publishing Company Dept. W 2
Butterick Building, New York

Please send me a copy of The New Butterick Cook Book for which I will pay the postman only $2.50 for the book, plus postage ($2.65 prepaid), when it is delivered to me. My understanding is that I may return this book after 5 days and have my money refunded if I am not fully satisfied.

Name ....

Street and No. ....

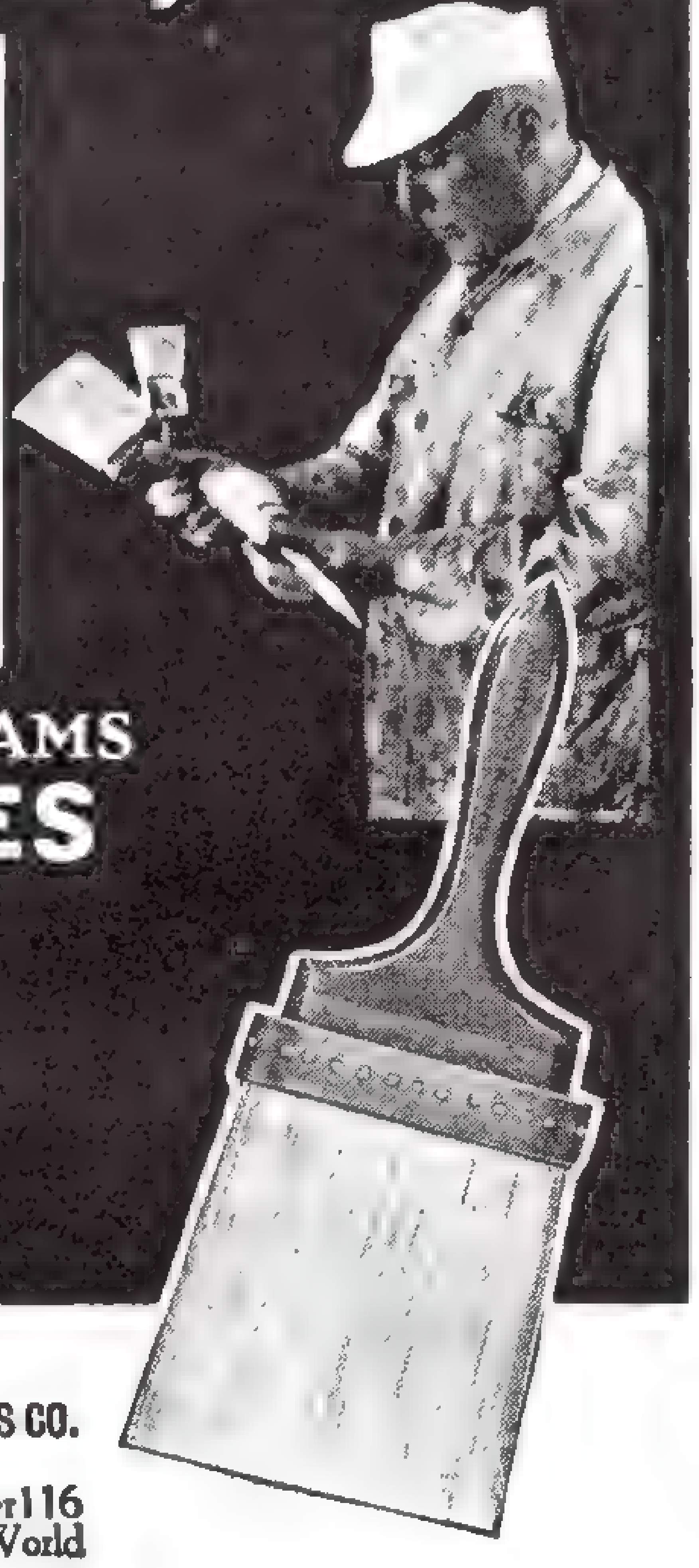
City .... *State* ....

In Canada send coupon to The Butterick Publishing Co. 468 Wellington St., W., Toronto

Owing to Postal Regulations, customers outside the U. S. and Canada are requested to send remittance with order. Use International Money Order.

Buying a Brush? Buy a Good One!

The handle, ferrule, and labor in a cheap brush cost as much as in a good brush. The big difference is in the bristles. The life of a brush is in the quality of its bristles and the way they are fastened. *Buy a good one!*



WHITING-ADAMS BRUSHES

Send for Illustrated Literature

JOHN L. WHITING-J. J. ADAMS CO.
BOSTON, U. S. A.
Brush Manufacturers for Over 116 Years and the Largest in the World

TYPEWRITER PRICES CUT

Your choice of the World's best typewriters—Underwood, Remington, Oliver—full size, late model, completely rebuilt and refinished brand new. Prices smashed down to half. Act quick.

Free Trial

$2 and it's yours

Just send your name and address and we will mail you our complete **FREE CATALOG** prepaid, fully describing and showing actual photographs of each beautiful machine in full colors. Tells every detail of our direct-to-you small-payment plan. Write now for tremendous saving. No obligation whatever. Still time if you act now.

International Typewriter Exchange
186-188 W. Lake Street Department 483 Chicago, Ill.

Free Mailing Lists

Will help you increase sales
Send for FREE catalog giving counts and prices on thousands of classified names of your best prospective customers--National, State and Local--Individuals, Professions, Business Concerns.

99% Guaranteed by refund of 5¢ each

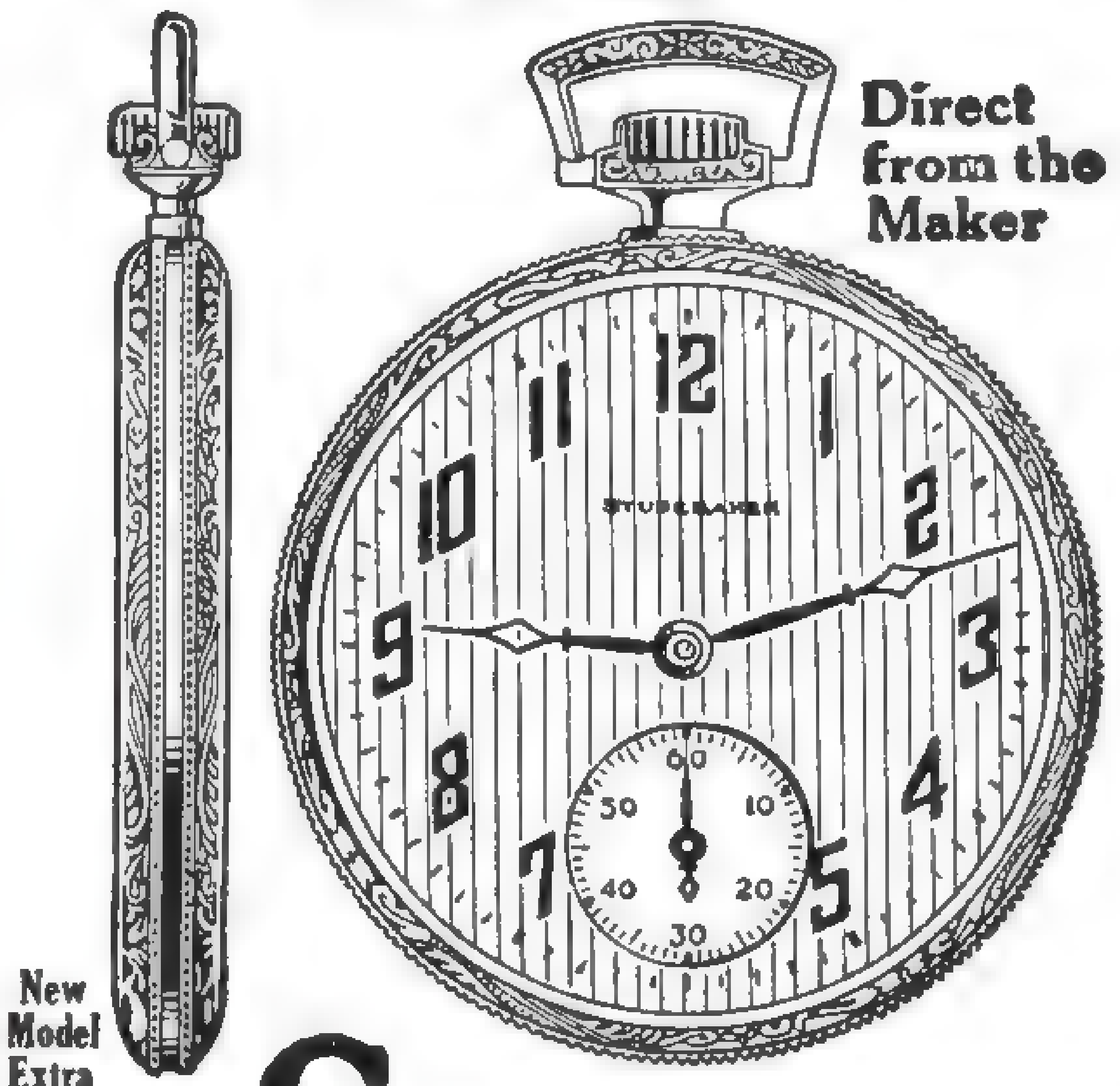
ROSS-Gould Co. 591 N. 10th St **St. Louis**

BIG MONEY **AND FAST SALES. Every Owner Buys** Gold Initials for his auto. You charge $1.50, make $1.35. Ten orders daily easy. Write for particulars and free samples.
AMERICAN MONOGRAM CO., Dept. 85, East Orange, N. J.

21 Jewel ~ Extra thin

STUDEBAKER

The *Insured* Watch



Direct from the Maker

SENT FOR $1.00 DOWN!

Only $1.00! The balance in easy monthly payments. You get the famous Studebaker 21 Jewel Watch—Insured for a lifetime; a choice of 60 new Art Beauty Cases; 8 adjustments, including heat, cold, isochronism and 5 positions—***direct from the maker*** at lowest prices ever named on equal quality. Write today for FREE BOOK of Advance Watch Styles.

Watch Chain FREE!

For a limited time we are offering a beautiful Watch Chain FREE. Write now while offer lasts.

Mail Coupon for FREE Book

Send at once and get a copy of this book—FREE! See the newest, beautiful, advance styles in Studebaker Art Beauty Cases and Dials. Read how you can buy a 21 Jewel Studebaker Insured Watch direct from the maker—save big money—and pay for it on easy monthly payments.

Write! for our free book. It will post you on watch styles and watch values. Send coupon at once. Get Free Chain offer today while it lasts.

STUDEBAKER WATCH CO.
Dept. X21 South Bend, Indiana
Canadian Address: Windsor, Ontario

STUDEBAKER WATCH CO.
Dept. X21, South Bend, Indiana

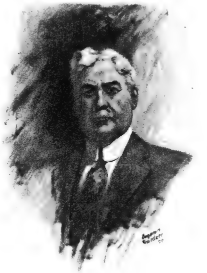
Please send me your Free Book of Advance Watch Styles and particulars of your $1.00 down offer.

Name ....
Address ....
City .... *State* ....

Enright To Talk

Former Police Commissioner of World's Largest City is Ready to Tell Some Secrets—Does Not Fear Consequences. Takes Over Editorship of Celebrated Magazine POLICE STORIES.

Head of the International Police Conference, He is Probably THE ONE MAN in the World who Possesses All the Facts about Many Famous Crimes and Criminals.



Complete History of the "WHITE-SLAVE" Traffic and Startling Facts Relating to Vice Conditions in New York City and Elsewhere to be made Public for The First Time!

WHILE holding the office of Police Commissioner of the City of New York, Richard E. Enright naturally felt constrained to keep secret many amazing incidents and events which came under his notice, or in which he played an active part. During former Commissioner Enright's term of office some murders that afterwards became famous were committed. You will probably recall among other celebrated murder-mysteries that of "Dot" King, whose death was enshrouded with such strange circumstances and horror. Joseph Elwell, the world-famous bridge expert and devoted admirer of the fair sex, was found sitting in an armchair in his home with a bullet through his brain. One bright September day, at high noon, Wall Street shook to its foundations. When the police succeeded in calming the panic-stricken people, the corner of Broad and Wall Streets looked like a battle ground. There were three dozen mangled corpses, some rent asunder, and upwards of two hundred seriously injured scattered on the streets. The public never knew what had happened, and former Police Commissioner Enright thought best not to take them into his confidence at that time. He will prove that "Truth is stranger than fiction" in a manner that no one can dispute, and while he intends no injustice to any, he intends to give the public facts, in the pages of POLICE STORIES, without regard to whom or what may be affected. He fully expects to be abused and threatened, if nothing worse, before his revelations have been published more than a week. The April issue is now on the newsstands. It has a startling story in reference to a subject about which you have heard much—the so-called "White-Slave" traffic.

"POLICE STORIES," the editorship of which former Police Commissioner Enright has assumed, is a well-known monthly magazine devoted to gripping, fascinating stories, both fact and fiction, about criminals and their tireless enemies, the police.

SUBSCRIBE NOW—and take advantage of the Special Offer made to introduce former Police Commissioner Enright's first amazing story. You will want to READ ALL THE OTHERS. SEND YOUR SUBSCRIPTION NOW!

INTRODUCTORY OFFER—SEND COUPON

POLICE STORIES,
Richard E. Enright, Editor, 132 West 31st St., New York City.

Gentlemen: I enclose $1.00 for Special 5 months' Introductory Subscription.

NAME ....

ADDRESS ....

R. F. D. No. .... CITY ....

STATE ....

Own this beautiful **DIAMOND DINNER RING** *Send no money*

YOUR CREDIT IS GOOD WITH US

TAKE A FULL YEAR TO PAY

Superior quality dinner ring of 18 Kt. white gold. Three large, first quality, genuine blue-white diamonds set in hand carved, pierced mounting of latest, lace design; two genuine French blue sapphires accentuate the brilliance of the diamonds. Usual retail price higher, order direct from us, **only $42.50.**

Don't pay now—just send your name and address and this exquisite dinner ring will come to you parcel-post prepaid on **10 DAYS FREE TRIAL. Pay postman only $2 on delivery,** then after free trial, pay balance—**$3.38** a month for one year. Money back if not satisfactory.

ALL TRANSACTIONS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

No Red Tape **No Delay**

WRITE FOR *FREE* ROYAL CATALOGUE

See the thousands of special values in diamonds, watches and jewelry. Send for your copy at once.

ROYAL DIAMOND & WATCH CO.
Dept. 1563 170 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

ADDING MACHINE

FITS VEST POCKET

A marvelous calculator. Does the work accurately and quickly as a $300 machine. Invaluable to anyone who uses figures. Don't carry pad and pencil. This startling invention will solve all problems in a minute. Business men, students, professional people, all need this HANDY HELPER.

SEND NO MONEY

Don't send money, just name and address. Pay postman only $2.95 plus few cents postage. Try it for 10 days. Your money back if not satisfied.

Counts To **1 Billion**

Results in plain sight all the time—**clears instantly.** Made of steel and brass, in handsome case, fits vest pocket; weight only 3 oz. Send for yours now—you'll save time and money.

PRICE $2.95

Reliable Adding Machine Corp., Dept. 645
184 W. Washington St., Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS Here's a dandy chance to make money. Everybody wants one. Fine profit. Write for new offer.

Accounting

THE CONTROL OF BUSINESS

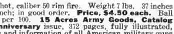
ACCOUNTANCY

Accountants command big income. Thousands needed. About 6,000 Certified Public Accountants in U. S. Many earn $5,000 to $20,000. We train you thoroly at home in your spare time for C. P. A. examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous bookkeeping knowledge unnecessary—we prepare you from ground up. Our training is supervised by Wm. B. Castenholz, A. M., C. P. A., assisted by staff of C. P. A.'s. Low cost—easy terms. Write now for valuable 64 page book free.

This Book FREE!

LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 576-H Chicago

$4.50



Spencer Magazine Carbine

Lever action, 5 shot, caliber 50 rim fire. Weight 7 lbs. 37 inches long; barrel 20 inch; in good order. **Price, $4.50 each.** Ball cartridges $1.50 per 100. **15 Acres Army Goods, Catalog 1925, 60th Anniversary** issue, 372 pages, fully illustrated, contains pictures and information of all American military guns and pistols since 1775, also rifles, revolvers, uniforms, tents, knapsacks, saddles, war medals, etc. Mailed 50c stamps. **Special New Circular** for 2c stamp. Est. 1865.

Francis Bannerman Sons, 501 Bdway, New York City

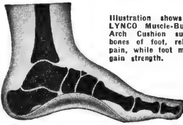


Illustration shows how LYNCO Muscle-Building Arch Cushion supports bones of foot, relieving pain, while foot muscles gain strength.

Rest Your Tender Foot Arches On Soft, Springy CUSHIONS

Never permit them to be propped up by some hard, unyielding support. LYNCO Muscle-Building Arch Cushions are entirely flexible—they're Nature's first-aid protection against foot aches and pains due to weak or fallen arches.

They conform to every curve of the foot in any position it takes, giving continuous, resilient support. It is the only type of support that follows every movement of the foot and allows free muscular action and normal circulation.

LYNCO Muscle-Building Arch Cushions are made of special cellular rubber covered with soft leather—*no metal.* They give immediate and permanent relief from pain. Light in weight and comfortable to wear any time with any shoes.

See your doctor, chiropodist or shoe dealer —or write us for full information.

KLEISTONE RUBBER CO., Inc.
70 Cutler Street Warren, R. I.

Lynco

EASY-WEAR FOOT AIDS

For Beauty's gentle care ~

this delightful *new* form of genuine Ivory

"How lovely!" you exclaim when first you see the new graceful cake of Guest Ivory. Like so many millions of other women, you too are instantly charmed by its petite daintiness.

And then what a happy discovery to learn that this delicately-modeled cake in its fresh blue dress is really genuine Ivory Soap—the genuine guardian of delicate complexions for almost fifty years.

Surely, never was a soap more fittingly garbed to rest upon white washstands. Never was a soap more faultlessly fashioned for feminine fingers.

And most assuredly, one can find nowhere a finer, purer soap at any price. Guest Ivory costs but five cents.

PROCTER & GAMBLE

For the face and hands

99⁴⁴⁄₁₀₀% Pure

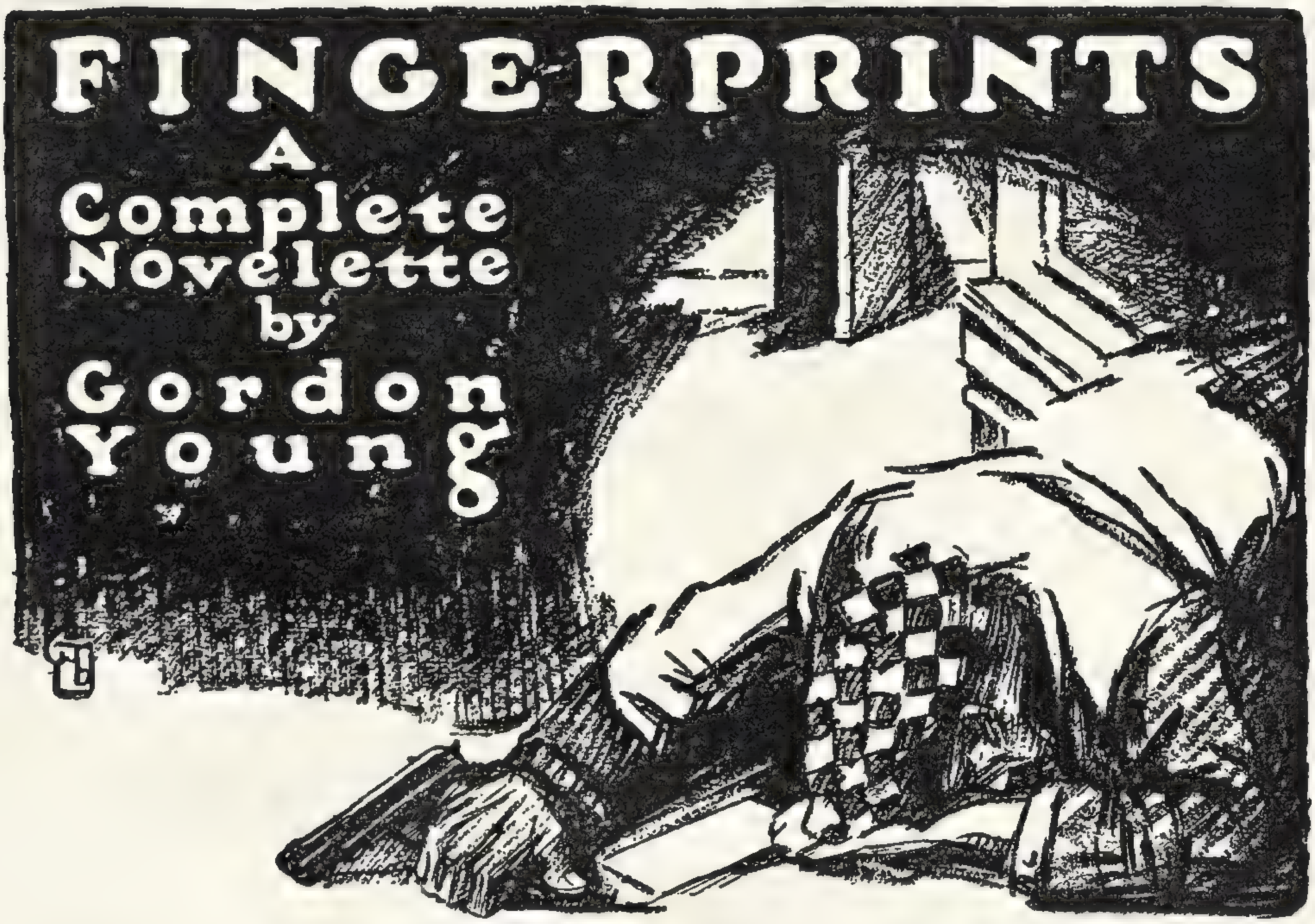
As fine as soap can be

5¢ It Floats

© 1926, by The Procter & Gamble Co., Cincinnati, O.

Guest
IVORY

Adventure
MAY 8, 1926
VOL·LVIII NO·3



FINGERPRINTS

A Complete Novelette
by
Gordon Young

Author of "Days of '49," "La Rue of the 88," etc.

I SUPPOSE that first I ought to say something about Felix Guerini, although for all of the trouble I got into because of him, I never learned enough to be able to tell much of who he was or from where he came. He owned a lot of rare gems and was a somewhat mysterious man; mysterious, since any man is so-called if he is unsocial and doesn't tell people his business.

Little was known, or ever known of him in San Francisco, where he had lived, but a few years. The name was said to be Italian; but since he spoke many languages he could have chosen an Italian name without the help of parents. His library was not large, but contained books in German, English, French, Italian, Russian. Practically all of his books dealt with jewels. The few persons who came in contact with him were usually connoisseurs, and recognized him as an authority on precious stones, particularly engraved stones. There is some name for this trade, art or whatever it is, but I have forgotten what word it was that the newspapers used at the time his name was being printed with mine all over the front page. Where Guerini had acquired his knowledge or stolen his collection, if he did steal it, is unknown; but he possessed and kept by him jewels that were supposed to be, and no doubt were, priceless.

He lived with a young man that was called his son in a big stone house that was in many respects more like a jail than a home. All of the doors were heavy and

Copyright, 1926, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain. All rights reserved.

heavily barred, with peepholes so that one could look out upon whoever knocked. Alarms were attached to windows. And as if the Guerinis were afraid of servants, they kept but two, and one of these slept away from the house. His jewels would seem reason enough for such precautions. He was said never to have been unarmed and, according to the newspapers, when they began to talk about him, shotguns were placed all about the rooms. From what I know of the newspaper manner and accuracy, I would say that perhaps a shotgun had been found somewhere in the house.

Guerini—I take this from the newspapers—was a tall man, darkly bearded, courteous but reserved. I gather that in appearance he was of the type from which foreign courts are popularly supposed to select their diplomats—or at least of the type from which play producers select their actors to play the rôle of foreign diplomats.

His so-called son was unlike him, being a blond, nervous, pale young man, whose features were aristocratic and weak; and, in spite of the monastic life imposed by his so-called father, he looked somewhat dissipated, and perhaps the use of dope was not unknown to him.

II

ON A morning not so very long ago my Chinese boy whom I called Ch'lo, that being as near as I could persuade my tongue to pronounce his honorable name, placed coffee and toast on the table before me then went to answer the door bell of the apartment.

It was about ten o'clock. I was in dressing gown and pajamas. As I am a cautious man, particularly when there are reasons for suspecting everybody I do not know, I got up from the table.

One of the two big, solid men with square jaws and square-toed shoes that were at the door said abruptly—

"We're from headquarters," opened his coat, disclosing a detective sergeant's badge, and started to enter.

Ch'lo was a young, fat, good-natured Chinese boy, but loyal. He knew that there were excellent reasons for my recent instructions that no one was to be admitted until I knew who was coming. He flung himself against the detectives, protesting shrilly, and was knocked aside. But I had already passed from the breakfast room into the hallway, and was waiting.

They were Detective Sergeants Heard and Jones, old-timers on the force. I knew them slightly, but knew about them from the only source that information about a police officer may be regarded as trustworthy—the underworld. Also, as I said, I had known them slightly for some years. They were bull-headed, rough-handed, honest officers; honest enough not to have much use for such a man as myself, who had long been notorious as a professional gambler, and in other ways. The very objectionable title of "gunman" had been linked to my name.

It was just about this time that in many parts of the country, and particularly in the West, there was a series of bandit raids on mail trucks; and I now know that certain persons thought, and set about whispering the thought, that my experience and character was such as fitted me for leadership in a gang of mail truck bandits. I had been in and out of trouble for so many years without being laid by the heels that their imagination gave me credit for being audaciously resourceful and too crafty to be caught, as the saying is, with the goods.

Detective Sergeant Heard, seeing me step into the narrow hall of the apartment, said—

"G'mornin', Richmond," and Detective Sergeant Jones grunted. Both eyed me accusingly.

"Good morning," I said, and waited.

"You pulled a boner las' night, didn't you?" said Heard, who did not lean toward the subtle method of cross-examination.

I reflected for a moment, then replied:

"Yes. Rather. But how did you know of it?"

Both grunted with a kind of eager satisfaction, and Heard said:

"We know lots o' things this mornin'. S'pposin' we take a little ride over to the station an' talk it over. Come 'long!"

"Of course, if you insist," I said.

I have often been invited to headquarters to help the police understand some situation or other where I seemed to stand in an unfavorable light.

"If you insist, but"—I indicated my state of undress—"I'll need some clothes. And I am as willing to talk to you as to anybody at headquarters."

I pointed to the next room, inviting them.

They exchanged glances; then Heard, all the while eying me, said to Jones—

"We might as well get it out of him here as over there."

By which I understood that they were looking forward to the credit of having got whatever it was they wanted out of me without the help of their superiors.

As we went into the next room I noticed quickly and with rising suspicion that they had me go first; then, though Heard quickly tapped the pocket on one side of my dressing gown, and Jones the pocket on the other, thus more or less surreptitiously trying to make sure that I was not armed, I did not ask what they meant. I was quite sure that I had nothing to fear from their questions or suspicions. And though I had no expectation at all of having to go so far as to show a gun to them, I was quite satisfied that the tapping of my dressing gown pockets should make them think that I was unarmed.

I was, however, mystified; but the experience was not entirely new. I have often been suspected by policemen.

We sat down in deep comfortable chairs, they facing me at but little more than an arm's length away.

I called Ch'lo and had him place smoking stands and pass cigars. I never smoke, but my cigars are of the best. The detectives eyed the large box with a trace of interest, but I noticed that they both kept half an eye on me. Even when each was sniffing the big black cigars as if he knew good tobacco when he smelled it, I was not forgotten; and I could tell too that they regarded even Ch'lo with suspicion. He had tried to block their entrance; that would seem to indicate that he was not to be trusted—by the police. I noticed that they appeared to watch carefully to detect any sort of signal that might pass between Ch'lo and myself. They saw nothing for there was nothing to be seen; yet when Ch'lo started to leave the room, Jones, whose voice was harsh and hoarse, as if he had yelled too much and strained his throat, said:

"You there, boy! Set down where we can keep an eye on you. An' be quiet. You hear me?"

Ch'lo glanced toward me, then with a kind of blank unhappiness on his round young face sat down as told, folded his arms and looked at no one.

The detectives lighted their cigars, then each turned the cigar about and for a moment looked at the glowing tip; but many people, and especially detectives, who practise that sort of thing, can appear to be looking at one thing when they watch another.

I sat quietly, made no move, asked no questions. I very much wanted to hear what it was all about, of course; but I have patience, lots of patience.

"Now," said Heard, throwing a leg over his knee and sitting well back in the deep chair, "tell us about last night."

"If told properly," I said, "it would make a long story."

"Then cut it short," said Jones, husky of throat and aggressive. "Hit the high spots. We ain't got much time."

"I don't know how the police could have learned about what I did last night," I told them, "or why, having learned, they would be interested. But I will tell you. You know, both of you, that from time to time I have had a little trouble now and then with some crook or other—"

Both detectives grunted unsympathetically.

"— and it has been something less than a year since I shot that fellow who, behind a half dozen aliases, is now known to have been Louis Renaud."

"Yeah," said Heard, noncommittally, looking at me through half closed eyes.

"Unh-huhn," Jones grunted, as if he knew more about that affair than I was likely to admit. But he didn't, for I had nothing to conceal.

"Renaud," I added, "was a bad one and hard to catch. Had his slim, delicate fingers in every sort of crime, but specialized in jewels—either because he liked to handle them or because he had a chain of fences, high class jewelers, that disposed of the stuff at good advantage for him. A real crook genius, Renaud. Twice, disguised as a woman, he slipped right through the police's fingers. Once, there in Chicago—you know the story—the dragnet brought him in. He was in woman's clothes. They turned him over to the matron. He bought her off, and this Renaud that everybody was looking for went before the judge and was fined as a woman vagrant. Well, as you know, he made the mistake of taking a shot at me there in New York. True enough, I was in his house and had come in without knocking, but everything turned out all right."

"Yeah. You've managed, in the past," said Jones with that croaking hoarseness of his that must have often made guilty persons shiver, "*in the past,*" he repeated, "to get yourself clear ever'time you shot somebody. You been lucky."

"Do you mean that I should have been tried for shooting Renaud? When, as you know, there was three separate rewards offered for him, dead. I collected all of them and gave the money to charity. If you know anything about the case, you know that."

"Good publicity stunt, that was," said Heard. "The charity, I mean."

"What you done was all right, but why you done it may 've been all wrong," said Jones. I looked at him inquiringly, and he explained bluntly enough: "'T ain't right to shoot no man so you can wear his shoes!"

I showed no indignation and made no protest, but did say:

"I'll tell you why I came to go up against Renaud. I cut his trail when I was trying to drag a young fool nephew of mine out of trouble and—"

"Yeah," said Heard, "that 's all interestin', but what about las' night, heh?"

"This. I shot Renaud. Because of that somebody who calls himself the 'Avenger' has seen fit to warn me that I am going to regret the day I was born."

"Aw, that 'll make good readin' when you pass it out to the reporters," said Jones, "but how about las' night? Come through."

"About last night," I repeated. "It has to do with Renaud and what I've just been telling you. You see, I need to explain so—"

"Cut it short," said Jones, deepening that harsh husky voice and glaring at me in a way that would have made any guilty man uneasy. "Cut it short. For a bird that 's somehow got the name o' not talkin' much, you 're wasting a lot o' words. We, me an' him here, ain't on no newspaper!"

I declined to be ruffled. Very few persons have ever seen me angered, and of those few perhaps none knew that I was angry. The man who loses his temper easily is, at least while in temper, hardly better than a fool. Some unpleasant and many dishonest things have been said about me, but I have never been called hotheaded. "Cold-blooded" is what I am usually called by persons who would be wiser to keep silent about matters of which they know nothing.

"About last night," I repeated again. "How you learned of what happened, I don't know. And what I did must appear to you fellows as pretty much of a boner, as Sergeant Heard called it. But let me explain.

"During the past month I have had several warnings from the so-called Avenger that I was going to be killed. I haven't lost any sleep over them. Avengers and such are usually bugaboos. True enough, during the past month I have been shot at twice—but I have been missed before, lots of times. But—"

"All that goin' on," Heard asked with just a trace of mockery, "an' you never made no report?"

"Have you ever known me to report my troubles to the police?"

"Ugh," said Jones, hoarsely sarcastic, "you 're one o' them as takes the law into their own hands, eh?"

"Nothing, Sergeant," I told him, "but the law of self-defense."

"Well, these times you been shot at, did you shoot back a-tall?" Heard inquired, cocking his head and giving me a look that seemed to say, "Now go ahead and lie; I want to see how well you do it."

"Both shots," I told him, "were fired into my car; and both, though they broke windows, were badly aimed."

"We ain't heard o' nobody bein' found dead around this neighborhood," said Jones grinning unpleasantly, "an' you sort o' pass for a dead shot."

"I've been other places than this neighborhood and—"

"Right!" said Heard. "An' fellers have been found dead where you've been, recent!"

"Meaning just what?" I asked.

"Get along with your tale. Then we'll talk some. Make it snappy. We ain't got much time."

"VERY well then," I said. "It was not the threats that I have received, nor even being shot at a time or two, that caused me to lose my sleep last night. But during the past week my apartment here has been entered at least twice, and for the life of me I can't understand why or how. There 's some sort of mystery about that.

"So yesterday afternoon when a woman telephoned that she knew all about my danger and the fact that my apartment was being entered repeatedly, naturally I was interested. She wanted to know if I would be willing to undertake a service for her in return for the information that she could give me. I asked what she wanted, what kind of service. She said that, of course, it couldn't be very well discussed over the telephone, and asked where we could meet that night and be absolutely alone and unseen. I told her, 'Any place you say.' She said that she was suspected and being watched, but that she knew that this night, sometime between 10 P. M. and 2 A. M. she would be able to get away unfollowed.

I told her to name wherever she liked for the appointment—for if she named some place that I did not like, I didn't have to keep it. She said there was a small vacant store building near where she was, and that it would be convenient for her to run in there. She said the building was unlocked on the side door, and for me to go there and wait for her. She said that she would surely come, though she couldn't tell any nearer than between 10 and 2 at just what hour she would be able to come. I agreed to this, of course. I drove out before dark and had a look at the store. She had given me the number. Then just to make sure that I wasn't being invited into a trap, I went out before 8 o'clock. Waiting is one of the things I do well. I listened and watched carefully and I did not see or hear a thing that gave me reason to believe that the woman had tried to draw me into a trap—yet she did not come. But there I was, all night. Why that should greatly interest the police, I can't imagine."

"Unh," said Heard. "You believed all that bull she give you?"

There was a hint in his voice indicating that he believed nothing of what I had been telling him.

"No," I told him. "Neither believed it nor disbelieved it. This much I knew: The woman did have some connection with, or at least some knowledge of, those who have been taking pot-shots at me, and she knew about my apartment being entered, though I have reported it to no one. And I will go to almost any trouble to get in touch with somebody who can give me information on that matter. I can't think that the woman meant to play a trick. Perhaps, after all, she could not get off."

Heard and Jones stared at me in unfriendly silence for a moment or two, then nodded understandingly toward each other.

"If that 's the best alibi you can think up," said Jones, "you 're out o' luck. Ain't he, Sam?"

"You ever hear of Felix Guerini?" asked Heard, with a hard scowling stare.

I hesitated, then said—

"Yes."

"Why 'd it take you so long to say so, huhn?" Heard inquired.

Jones spoke up—

"For a gambler that's got hisself some reputation for showin' nothin' and sayin' nothin', you 're playin' a pretty weak hand!"

"The woman, yesterday, over the telephone, warned me that Felix Guerini was the man I had to look out for. But when I asked who this Guerini was, and where he could be found, she said that she would tell me everything when we met. That's all I know of Guerini, and the only time I ever heard the name."

Heard nodded, as if trying to make me believe that he believed that; but Jones, feeling about his pockets, asked of me, "Got a match?" and as I picked up the box of matches off the smoking stand to offer him what was really almost under his nose, I saw that he did not want a match. Though he was quite sure that I was unarmed, he took that little precaution to have me off guard for a moment as he drew a gun.

"Take it easy, Everhard!" he said. "Told you to look out for Guerini, did she? You looked out for him all right—him and his son both! Dead, shot and stabbed—both of 'em."

"I? Will you explain to me why you think that?"

"You"—Jones chuckled hoarsely—"was seen to enter the house, just a little after 10 P. M. and—"

"YEAH," said Heard, composedly, at the same time, making a silencing gesture toward his companion, then blew smoke at the ceiling, and with his head thrown back, not at all watching me, he asked, "You, by any chance, ever own or see a .45 automatic with a lot o' gold dodads on it?"

"Gold inlay all over it?" Jones added. "Know that gun? An' jus' set still! We know you 're a feller that 'll shoot at the drop of a hat, or a little sooner; so one wiggle out o' you, an' I'll save the hangman a job!"

I toyed with the match-box and looked from one detective to the other. I understood clearly enough that if I wasn't careful I was going to find myself in a very bad situation. I began to have suspicions that the unknown woman, over the telephone, had, after all, trapped me in that empty store building.

Heard was saying—

"Know anything about a gun like that one we described?"

"Yes," I told him. "I own a pair of ornate automatics."

"Oh, you do, huh? Do you reckon by any chance it could be one of yours we found there this mornin'? Huh?"

"I rather think that the chances are that it is," I said slowly. "I begin to see a bit of light. That woman sewed me up so I haven't a chance in the world for an alibi. Somebody could have stolen my guns and put one there. In fact a burglar did take them from a case the other day—but, see here, you mentioned just now that I was seen to enter the Guerini house. Tell me who says that?"

Heard put on his third-degree manner. He growled savagely:

"Stop your lyin'. Cave in! We 've got you dead to rights. You can't bluff out o' this."

"Go easier with you if you confess," said Jones, trying to shape his rasping voice into a half confidential, friendly tone.

"All right. I'll confess to you that I had nothing to do with the Guerini murder."

I said it, as well as I could, with an air of believing that was just what they wanted to hear; and after an instant's blank gaze they grinned at me jeeringly.

"Yeah," said Jones. "We don't have no trouble, ever, gettin' them kind o' confessions!"

"Yeah," Heard explained. "We could get you hung up before a jury o' deaf men! Your alibi ain't worth a ——. You was there las' night—you was seen there! You been there before. There was a gun there, like one o' them you admit havin'. It's got fingerprints on it an'—"

"Mine? Since when have my fingerprints been on record?"

"Well they will be in about a half hour! The 'dentification bureau's got that gun now, an' are goin' to have *your* fingerprints to make some comparisons. If you ain't guilty as —— you'll be willin' to come along. But if you happened to forget that gun las' night in your excitement o' carryin' off all them jewels, why I reckon you'll feel some squeamish about takin' a walk with us over to headquarters. What d' you say?"

What I said was:

"Surely. I know that I didn't do it. And I want to do anything that'll help prove to you men that I didn't; but what I thought was:

"I'd better go slow. Somebody has tried to frame me. That somebody was clever enough to put me in a hole last night so that I haven't anything that looks like an alibi. And if that somebody left one of my guns at the scene of the murder, I can be sure that he was forethoughted enough to leave my fingerprints on the gun."

"Y'see," said Heard, showing me how useless it would be for me to make any further denials, "las' night a little after ten a tall man with a thin face, like yourn, an' a cane, was let into the house by young Guerini, who said, 'Good evenin', Mr. Richmond' an'—"

"The servant," Jones broke in, explaining, "she was up at the top o' the stairs. You know, they all been livin' on a sort of strain there. She heard the doorbell ring an' come to the stairs to take a look. She knew you by sight. You been there before."

"THIS mornin'," Heard resumed, "she found the bodies an' called the p'lice. For a cool feller, you must've got pretty excited over all them jewels. You forgot your gun!"

"Yeah," said Jones, holding the gun he had drawn in his lap and waggling it, slightly, "an' now we'll jus' go along over to headquarters an' compare your fingerprints with them on the gun. Then I guess your career as a bad man'll end with your neck in a noose!"

I had the match-box still in my fingers and toyed with it as I looked from one to the other of the detectives, and thought over what they had told me.

My name is Richmond, though in former years as a gambler who was unlucky enough to get into trouble frequently, I was known as Everhard.

Now I felt, and not unreasonably, that the very fact of my gun—if it was my gun, and from the description, combined with what I already knew of how the plot seemed to have been framed against me, I was of the opinion that it probably was my gun—as I am trying to say, I felt that the very fact that my gun was found there should have been considered as evidence enough that I had had absolutely nothing to do with the crime. I am about as likely to forget a shoe off my foot as my gun.

That witness on the stairs troubled me some, for it was barely possible that she had seen some man of my description enter the house; and in a plot so elaborate as this one against me seemed to be, perhaps some imposter had been introduced to the Guerinis under my name.

Then I said to myself:

If that witness on the stairs has told the police the truth about what she saw, then if she takes one good look at me she ought to say, "This is not the man!"

But supposing she should take one look at me and say, "That is the man!" In that case the chances are that I would be hanged.

I did not care to go to police headquarters until I knew something more about the character of this witness, for once they got me behind iron bars I would be helpless and would have to depend on lawyers. I haven't much faith in the ability of lawyers to help innocent men; most of their practise and effort is devoted to helping guilty men evade conviction.

"Gentlemen," I said, "it appears that I have been framed."

"There you go, framed!" said Jones derisively.

"*Framed*, heh?" Heard inquired. "Ever' crook says that. This is a dead open an' shut case. An' if you ain't guilty, why ——, them fingerprints 'll show it. So come along. Let's be goin'."

"Just a minute, please. Doesn't it occur to you that this case against me is suspiciously perfect?"

"Not a bit!" said Jones.

"Suits us fine as it is," said Heard.

"What you mean, too perfect, anyhow?" Jones inquired.

He held the gun he had drawn in his hand, and his hand in his lap.

"Are you sure," I asked, "that I didn't leave a written confession at the scene of the crime? Or at least my name and telephone number?"

"Don't get funny!" said Jones.

"I am not joking, or trying to be sarcastic. I am merely trying to point out that it appears that the man who did this crime has done everything he could to direct suspicion to me. He let himself be seen by a servant and—"

"You didn't know she was there!" said Heard.

"I would have known it. And he left a gun. It it is my gun, there are any number of people who can identify it, for the thing—both of them—were on display in a jeweler's window for some days."

"Yeah," said Jones, "but even the best o' you crooks trip an' stumble an' fall sometime or other. An' you got away with a fine lot o' stones. As big a haul as ever ol' Renaud made in his day!"

"But before we take this little walk over to headquarters," I said, "let us see whether or not my guns are missing. Some months ago I was given a pair of automatics as a present by a certain well known man, and—"

"You shot somebody for him, heh? An' he give you a Christmas present?" Jones inquired, almost good-naturedly though without friendliness.

"—and," I continued, "they are guns I never carried, or once fired. I—"

"This one's been shot all right—right into them men. Into their backs!" said Heard.

"After knives had been drove into their backs, too!" said Jones, scowling as he recalled the brutality of the murder.

"I? Use a knife?"

"Aw stop it! Of course you'd use a knife if a knife—"

"Gentlemen," I interrupted, "if you knew as much about me as I know of myself, you would as readily accuse a rattlesnake of having killed a man with a club as to accuse me of having used a knife. I would use poison as soon as a knife."

"Sure, I guess you would. Guess you'd use whatever served your purpose," said Jones. "You're a —— good shot, so naturally you use a gun most—it's safest."

"Yes, I think so," I admitted. "And any one who takes the trouble that I do to play safe, would not have left so many signs pointing toward him in this Guerini murder.

"Now," I went on, "I have always kept those decorated automatics in a case, and the case has been kept in the middle left hand drawer of the cabinet in the next room. Will one of you now look in that drawer and see if the case is there?"

They were suspicious of men; they believed me tricky, knew that I was considered somewhat dangerous; but Jones moved his gun slightly, and said:

"Go look, Sam. If this hardboiled baby makes a move we'll take him out o' here on a shutter!"

Heard went into the next room and returned with the black morocco case, bound with silver, in which the rich man who had wished to make me a present that I would value had enclosed the guns. Heard had opened the case. One of the guns was missing. The other lay in its pocket; it was shiny with a film of oil, as new as the day it had reached my hand.

"Don't touch it!" said Jones quickly to Heard. "Leave them fingerprints fresh so we can compare 'em with the other gat!"

Heard sat down, with the open case on his knee, and gazed at the gun there. He said, staring at me accusingly—

"This is its mate."

"Yes," I said. "As you see, one gun is missing. When it was stolen I do not know; but since last Saturday, for last Saturday—that was the seventh of the month—my rooms were entered, some things were taken, many scattered about, and those guns had been removed from the case, then left on the table as if the thief, on second thought had decided not to take them!"

"Rings phoney, that tale," said Jones.

"You mean a thief passed 'em up one day, then come back an' took just one?" asked Heard.

"Yes. Since one is gone and—"

"Let's go. Come along," said Jones, and made a move as if to rise.

I felt that I was in a tight place; that if I went to jail I would never get out unless I broke out; so I said:

"Just a minute. I am going to try to prove to you men that I didn't kill Geurini. If you'll listen—"

I held out the match box, offering it to Jones. He looked at the match box, then at the dead stub of a cigar between the fingers of his left hand; and as he took his eyes off me I simply dropped the match box from my extended hand, jerked the gun from his relaxed fingers, at the same time drew my own gun from its shoulder holster; and in a twinkling I was on my feet and had two guns pointed at the detectives—and of course had jumped back beyond arms' reach.

Heard swore explosively, like a man about to dare the worst; but he had hardly moved before he was covered. The open morocco case was still on his knees, and he held one hand to it; with the other he had started to reach for his gun, but being seated in a deep chair he could not get his hand to the gun easily. So he was caught without a chance. Jones, being unarmed, had started to spring from his chair, but he would have had to jump straight at his own gun. So, like a sensible man, he raised his hands, and Heard did the same.

They had no way of knowing that they could have overpowered me without being shot, that I would have submitted to arrest rather than kill either of them. I had the name of a man who could and would shoot; but if ever I have shot an honest man it was because he succeeded in making me believe that he was a crook and trying to make trouble for me.

"You're bein' a fool!" said Heard rapidly. "You can't get away! This'll make it harder for you!"

"Come on!" said Jones. "If you ain't guilty you ain't got nothin' be afraid of. This'll make it worse for you."

"Gentlemen," I told them, "I did not kill Guerini. I had no part, no interest, and no knowledge of the crime. But I am not going to jail. Evidence that has convinced you, who are experienced detectives, would surely cause a jury to convict and a judge to sentence me to be hanged. I can't stay here and argue with you. I am innocent. Some day you will know it. Ch'lo!"

Ch'lo answered quickly, and I told him to take the gun from Detective Heard's hip, then prepare to tie their hands and feet to the chairs in which they sat.

The detectives cursed me; they promised that they would catch me and hang me if it took the rest of their lives.

"The time will come," I said, "when you will make to me the sort of apology that you would make to any man whom you have wrongly accused."

"Not by a —— sight!" said Heard.

"See you in —— first!" said Jones.

"Shoot you on sight!" said Heard.

"I'll sell my home an' add that to the reward for catchin' you!" said Jones.

Ch'lo removed the morocco case from Heard's knees, placing it upon the floor; then, having taken the gun from the detective's holster, tied Heard's hands behind him, and feet to the chair. He tied Jones the same way; and when they were tied, I tightened the knots and bound cloth over their mouths so that they could not readily attract attention by yelling. The faces of both men were now so red that they seemed quite as if painted.

Because I usually play a lone-handed game, and am not nearly as bloodthirsty as some persons pretend to believe, it happens that I often have to tie people up and I am quite deft at it.

I was now confident that I could go into hiding and not be found as long as I chose to remain in hiding; and the simplest part of it was that I could get into hiding in less, much less than half a minute.

III

I WENT into my bedroom and while dressing, I said half jokingly to Ch'lo:

"I won't be surprized if they also accuse you of having helped me with that murder. You 'd better have a good alibi framed up for yourself. Where were you last night, anyhow?"

Ch'lo, being young and fat, grinned:

"Me las' night-time, I go see mos' honalble uncle. Nice writer man come talk, get sto'ies, 'bout Chinatown. Ho, I stay long time, tell um plenty fline lies. He had pletty wife. She say me nicee boy, you bet!"

The "writer man" was a very well known author.

"That," I told Ch'lo, "is the sort of luck worthless rascals have. You, who do not need it, have a perfect alibi. But you have done enough the past ten minutes to make those fellows want to hang you too. So you get out of here, and disappear. Find a dark corner, and stay there."

The boy was the nephew of a director of one of the tongs, so I knew that there was no need to worry about his security a minute after he reached Chinatown.

I dressed, but with no more haste than usual. I have for years worn much the same kind of dress: a black soft hat, always a dark suit, with never the least twinkling of jewelry about me; and since the time that a bullet somewhat stiffened a knee, I have carried a slim strong stick. At times, usually during rainy weather, or at times of heavy fog, the pain and stiffness in my knee is severe enough to cause a slight limp; at other times this is hardly noticeable.

When Ch'lo had gone, I went again into the room where the detectives writhed, more from exasperation than any physical discomfort; and they glowered ferociously at me above the cloths tied across their faces.

I took out a check book and fountain pen, wrote a check to "cash," and made the apparently accidental mark by which the cashier knew that there was no question as to the validity of the check—a mark that appeared, however, on only those made out to cash—; then I said:

"Gentlemen, I leave here a check, one thousand dollars. I want you to cash it and add it to the reward for the arrest and conviction of whoever is guilty of the Guerini murder. But as I have more confidence in myself than in any one else, and am much more interested than any one else in doing what is necessary to establish my innocence, I am going to do what I can to reclaim the check."

The only answer was a muffled growl from both men; it was the only sort of answer they could make, and vague as it was they put feeling into it. They saw, or thought they did, that I was making a "grandstand" play to pose as an innocent man.

I left them. I took with me nothing more than I had in my pockets, excepting my hat, my walking stick and an automatic in the shoulder holster, another in the holster at my hip. My training and long practise have been such that I shoot as well with one hand as the other; and usually when I fire one gun, the other is in my hand.

I opened the door and glanced along the hall, up and down.

The Franciscan was a quiet, fine, beautiful and costly apartment house. Those who lived there were supposed to breathe an air of "quiet refinement," and paid enough rent to have supported a thousand poor families in comfort.

When I was sure that no one was near, I crossed the hall, inserted the key I had ready at hand, closed the door quietly behind me, and apparently had disappeared from the city.

IV

HOW I came to have the key to my neighbor's apartment, he being an utter stranger to me, is simple enough when explained.

I had formerly lived in this apartment. It was near the street, and I did not like the street noises, so I had moved across the hall to the side that was more quiet. Almost a half block lay between it and the next building.

When I came to give up my first apartment I discovered that I had somehow mislaid one of the two keys; so I had another key made, turned in the two keys and thought no more of it. Some months had gone by, then when overhauling my drawers and things after the first robbery, about a week before, I had come upon the lost key in an old envelope among some papers that, during the general search and clean-up, I was destroying. I laid it aside, meaning to return it to the office. The thing slipped my mind, and within two days later I knew that again some one had entered my apartment. This time nothing appeared to have been taken, but the impudence of that sort of thing made me a bit exasperated. It was as though some burglarious scoundrel could come and go as he pleased; and I thought it just as well that I take the time to do a little watching; and having the key to the apartment across the hall gave me an idea.

The young sportsman who had the apartment, and his valet, were in Alaska, hunting bears. Here was an opportunity for me to step across the hall and have my whereabouts remain unknown while I sat by his door and listened for any footsteps that approached my own.

It may not have been right for me to do that, but there was nothing very wrong about it. The game of life, of such a life as mine anyhow, is much like chess; one can usually escape from any situation if one is a quick-thinking, skilful player who takes advantage of the best move possible; and in my life, as in many a chessman's game, what appears to be the boldest move is merely the safest. In fact, I am a very cautious player. So leaving the detectives trussed up, I entered my neighbor's apartment.

I had already spent much time here, watching as best I could to see who watched my own, but without success; and at least once when I was just across the hall, my apartment had again been entered. True enough, the hall was laid with a heavy carpet; no doors in the Franciscan squeaked when opened; and though an expert thief can be about as noiseless as a shadow, yet it did not seem reasonable to me that any one, however much of a phantom-like burglar he might be, could, when I watched, have entered my rooms unobserved. Yet such had been the case.

Remember, too, that I had been threatened with death and twice shot at. It was nothing new to be threatened or shot at. But it was something new to have my apartment entered by a person who seemed to know just what hours I was away, and to enter without making a sound that could be detected when I listened from just across the hall.

Now needing a place to retreat from the search of the angered detectives, I had naturally made use of my neighbor's apartment.

Entering, I took off my hat and coat, quietly moved a comfortable chair near the door and sat down.

To wait, just sit and wait, is one of the things that I do well, for among what virtues I have patience is the greatest.

But I did not have long to wait without being interested. I could hear a muffled thumping and bumping come from my rooms—even through the closed doors and across the hall. Heard and Jones were trying to work themselves loose; but because I had once tied up an eel of a fellow who showed me that he could slip from my knots almost as fast as I could tie them—a regular Houdini, that fellow—I had since been very careful when I fastened any one; though there are some people who can wriggle out of almost any lashing. But the detectives, both big strong men, were having difficulty in getting loose.

After a time, perhaps an hour or more, perhaps less, for when waiting I take no count of time, I heard the tramp of heavy feet in the hall. Three or four men came. They stopped before the entrance to my rooms. I could hear faintly the buzz of the bell as one of them rang. This started a renewed thumping from the bound detectives. I overheard voices in the hall saying, "Some one's in there all right!" and while one man continued to ring the bell, another pounded on the door, and a deep voice called, "Inside there! Open up! We're p'lice!" So I knew that other men from headquarters had come up to see about arresting me.

The noise they made attracted the attention of other people up and down the apartments; and while the police were trying my locked door and pounding on it, the manager of the Franciscan came. He was a man of the floor-walker type, with an air of good manner; but now he was agitated. From the sound of his voice I suspected that his face was white. He said: "I never liked that fellow!"—meaning me— "I didn't want him in the house!"

"Shut up!" one of the policemen told him. "An' open this door!"

While the police were telling those who had come out of near-by apartments to stand back, well back—"that —— Everhard, if he's in there, will shoot! Back ever'body!"—the door was unlocked, the police entered.

For a time there was much commotion in that part of the hall; much swearing in deep voices, a babbling, inquiries from the curious, much questioning from deep-throated men, and some of that excitement that women make in thin hysterical voices when trying to attract attention to themselves; but even the women who had entered the hall got only gruff answers from the angered officers who seemed to feel that I had outraged the force by tying up their two detectives.

I overheard indistinctly and much to my mystification some excited talk about jewels having been found in my apartment. There was such babble and commotion I could not make out what it was all about; but I was puzzled, for I owned no jewelry of any kind. Such stuff is for women and feminine men. What this magpie-like chatter was over, I could not imagine.

The hall at last grew quiet, and every one went away.

For many hours there was no sound except the occasional passing of some one. Loss of sleep seldom troubles me, and lack of food even less; but some time during the middle of the afternoon I went into the well-stocked kitchen, made coffee, ate a cracker, and washed up what dishes I used; this not to conceal the fact that some one had used the kitchen, but because it was a matter of courtesy to one whose rooms I had appropriated. Then I returned to my chair and waited.

V

IT WAS along late in the afternoon when I heard one of the house boys delivering the papers. I heard him drop the papers before my door as usual. I waited until he was gone; then, with caution, I opened the door, listened, and reached across the hall. Having them, I then went into another room lest some one chance to hear the rustling of paper in an apartment that was supposed to be, at present, unoccupied.

At one glance I saw that practically all of the front page was given over to the Guerini murder and to myself. All my life I had been well known in San Francisco; and the owner of the paper that had the most about me had rather justifiable reasons for wishing me bad luck.

There were pictures of fingerprints, one set taken from the gun found at the scene of the crime, another from the mate to that gun found in the case in my room. They were identical. There were pictures of myself: these, an artist's fanciful sketches of various incidents in my life that had previously made a stir in print; a picture of me at the gambling table, the cloth piled high with chips and money, and a second gambler gazing inquiringly at my face to see what his could see. The caption was, "Everhard wins forty thousand dollars on a pair of deuces"; which, like many things that appear in newspapers, was not true. In this particularly famous pot I had not held so much as a pair of deuces, but the pot did not contain anything like forty thousand dollars. There was a sketch of me shooting it out with a roomful of men, with men all about me firing away. Nonsense. If there is more than one or two men in the firing party, I am sure to have my back up against a wall or to be in a corner; and when my back seems to be exposed, you can be pretty sure that somewhere in front of me on the wall is a mirror that I am watching.

There were many sketches, offering a kind of illustrated history of my life, and quite as unreliable as most biographies.

Also there were photographs of the Guerinis. The elder Guerini was so darkly bearded that his features were almost concealed; and of his son, whose face was revealed as that of a degenerate sort of young aristocrat; and of the woman housekeeper, a Mrs. Gibbon, who had found the bodies.

I stared at her picture for a long time. It was not a photograph but had been snapped by a newspaper camera. She was a young widow. All references to her called her "beautiful," which, however, is a habit that newspapers have in speaking of any woman connected with a murder mystery. But even the wretched snapshot somewhat justified the adjective. And I have a prejudice against pretty women; it is not at all instinctive, but from experience.

There is no disguise, no alibi, no defense, so protective as beauty in a woman; and you can write it down as almost the first axiom of crime that if there is a pretty woman in the case, she is somehow responsible for the crime. She may be the innocent cause, or she may be the guilty cause; but she is somehow the cause, or has in a way contributed to the cause. That is common sense, and every policeman knows it—theoretically. But actually, many of them, when they encounter a pretty woman are susceptible to her personality, feel sympathy for her, particularly when there is no obvious reason for suspecting her of knowing more than she cares to tell. Experience has caused me to feel otherwise. Beauty in a strange woman, if she is implicated however remotely in any case that affects me, causes me to consider her guilty until she has proved herself innocent.

It was this Mrs. Gibbon's story that I read first, and I re-read it many times; I read it with suspicion, but I could not see anything wrong with it. What she said was not truthful, but she may have believed that it was true. She said that this man, who young Guerini had told her was Richmond, had visited the Guerini home at least three times. She had seen me enter, always at night, but had never spoken to me.

She said that the Guerinis, feeling that their lives were in peril, largely because their jewels might attract robbers, had considered the matter of engaging me as a sort of guard because of my reputation as a gunfighter.

This, she said, was what young Guerini had told her. He had also told her that I would come only at night because enemies were looking for me, and I did not like to venture out in daylight.

I said to myself:

"Something wrong here. Would men, who were in peril, think of hiring a protector who ventured out only at night for fear of getting hurt?"

It was possible, I said to myself, possible that some fellow has passed himself on the Guerinis under my name, and has tried to somewhat adopt my appearance by wearing dark clothes, a felt hat and carrying a cane.

One must always remember this when dealing with crooks: They are cunning, they are audacious, they are resourceful—but they are fools or they would not waste their time and ability in crime.

But to go on with the beautiful Mrs. Gibbon's story:

She said that she had never answered the door, never opened it to any one; this being done always by young Guerini, who looked first through a heavily glassed peephole in the door.

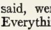
But if she heard the door-bell ring, usually she would come to the head of the stairs, or into the hallway, and watch to see who entered. She tried not to be nervous, she said, but somehow all that precaution, and anxiety of the Guerinis affected her. Yet she did not want to leave her position, for she was comfortable there, she liked the Guerinis, they were very good to her, and she was a widow with no friends in the city.

The night before, when the bell rang, she, being up stairs, had as usual come to the balustrade to see who would enter. She had been surprized to see that it was this Richmond, or Everhard as he was called, because young Guerini had told her that they had decided to have nothing to do with me, that they had decided that I was not at all the sort of man they wanted to have around. Yet she had seen young Guerini switch on the outside light, peer through his peephole, open the door; she had heard him say, "Good evening, Mr. Richmond," and had seen a tall, thin man, dressed in black, and carrying a cane, enter. She had seen his face clearly in the hall light, and recognized him as the man she knew as Richmond.

Then she had returned to her room and noticed that it was a little after ten o'clock. For a time she felt vaguely uneasy, but as she had often felt vaguely uneasy at night, she controlled her feeling and retired. All night she had been wakeful, sitting up frequently to listen, but the house remained quiet.

The next morning she arose as usual

about seven o'clock. The Guerinis, she said, were often up late and slept late. Everything seemed so natural, for the house was always quiet of a morning, that she forgot her uneasiness of the night before. She had never, she said, entered the library except when the Guerinis were present. The library door was always closed and locked. But this morning on coming down stairs she had found the library door wide open and the dead bodies inside. Then she had telephoned the police.



HAVING read that, I said to myself:

"There is just one way to find out whether or not this woman has lied. That is to come face to face with her. If she knows me, she will be guilty, for if she knows me by sight, she will know that it was not I who visited the Guerinis. If she does not recognize me, then perhaps she has mistaken an imposter for me. Of course, to make the test more accurate, I should meet her in some other sort of dress than that to which I am accustomed, though without a walking stick and without a hat ought to be enough.

"If she is in this plot against me, it is certain that somehow, unknown to me, she has had a good look at my face so that, if necessary, when she might be taken to the police station she could pick me out from among other prisoners.

"But," I added after further meditation, "there is something wrong here somewhere. Crooks who have so carefully considered all the details, who have destroyed my chance of an alibi, who have planted a gun with my fingerprints on it at the scene of the murder, would hardly have been so stupid as to overlook the presence of that housekeeper. They would know that more than likely she would have repeatedly caught sight of the man who came pretending that he was Richmond. On top of that, these men commit a double murder and fire a gun twice, without—apparently—having taken the least precaution to secure or silence this housekeeper.

"So," I concluded, "she has lied. She is as guilty as her father, the devil. And if I get my hands on her I'll get the truth out of her."

But to go on with the story about Mrs. Gibbon. "Gibbon" was the name she gave, though she was an Italian, "a gentlewoman" said the reporter. Reporters think any woman that speaks in a low voice is a gentlewoman, particularly when she is pretty. About three months before she had answered the Guerinis' advertisement for a housekeeper. She was a stranger in the city, but had references in New York which they looked up. They had, she said, very frankly explained their anxiety and uneasiness. "Played fair," was her phrasing. And she had hesitated about accepting the position. But she was lonely and a stranger. To become their housekeeper, even under such unpleasant conditions, had seemed best. And except for this apalling tragedy she would have had no regrets.

And though the paper pointed out that her bedroom was on the second floor at the rear of the house, I was still sure that any woman who had gone to bed in a state of uneasiness, and who had been wakeful through the night, would have been alarmed out of her sleep by the first shot, and therefore would have heard the second. I know, however, from my own experience that, since the general use of automobiles, gunshots are often mistaken for the backfiring of an automobile. But a nervous woman would have been more likely to mistake backfiring for gunfire.

"No," I concluded, affirming my previous suspicion, "she is guilty."

Thereupon I decided that the best thing I could do was to wait for night, then go and try to find out where Mrs. Gibbon was stopping and have a talk with her. It was not likely that she would remain in the Guerini home, and there was nothing in the paper to indicate where she might stop.

That, however, was not likely to be difficult to find out. I could telephone soon after dark to some newspaper office and make inquiry; unless the police were concealing her, as was not likely, any city editor would know where she was stopping, and I was quite sure I could persuade him to tell me, even if, as was unlikely, he did not do so readily.

The telephones in the Franciscan did not go through a house switch board, but ran directly to central, so I could telephone from where I was.

I gave close attention to other details of the crime. Father and son had been stabbed in the back and shot in the back; but there were marks about the head of the elder Guerini which indicated that he had first been hit over the head and knocked unconscious.

I took this to mean that he had been killed first, as was natural since he was the stronger; though perhaps the attack on both had been simultaneous.

The newspaper, never being at a loss to explain anything, guessed that I—my rapidity and accuracy with a gun being well known—that I had shot both men in the back, just *bang! bang!* Like that. Then, perhaps, I had driven a knife into the back of each to throw the police off my trail, since it was known, or supposed to be accepted by the police as a fact, that I had an aversion to the use of a knife.

All of which, to my way of thinking, was quite stupid; but the most stupid of all conjecture was that I, in the excitement of gathering up such a wealth of jewels, had laid aside my gun and forgotten it.

Anyhow, there was the gun with fingerprints on it that corresponded with those found on a similar gun that had been discovered in my apartment.

I believe that fingerprint experts admit that once in a great while, once in a million times or so, the fingerprints of two persons do prove to be identical; but that rare, and almost hypothetical coincidence, would be of no value to me if brought to trial.

Now, of course, I knew that the Guerinis had been murdered before they were shot; and that whoever had fired those shots had held my gun with gloved fingers in such a way as not to destroy the original fingerprints.

The police did not have my fingerprints on record; but the fingerprints of the gun in the Guerini case were not only similar to those on the gun in the morocco case, but to others discovered on various objects in my room.

But to me the most astonishing thing I learned was this: On the floor of my bedroom the police, that morning, had discovered two engraved gems that were pictured and described in the Guerini catalogue of jewels; a catalogue the old fellow, who must have been something of an artist, had made for himself.

I understood very well why those jewels had been dropped in my bedroom, under the bed, the newspaper said; but now how. The bodies of the murdered men had hardly been chilled before this evidence had been planted in my apartment in such a way as to make it appear that they had dropped from my hands unnoticed.

The foresighted thoughtfulness with which these scoundrels had hedged me about with every appearance of guilt made me aware that they were much more clever than enemies usually are. They wanted me hanged!

Now, understanding their foresightedness, I began by looking backward to understand how cleverly they had tricked me.

First there had been the threats, made by the avenger of Renaud. Avengers and such truck have never given me much sleeplessness. I have always regarded anybody who made threats as stupid; for whatever satisfaction it may give some people to threaten others, it has the disadvantage of putting the person threatened on guard.

But, twice, I had been shot at while driving; and missed. I was now very much inclined to believe that those shots had been fired with no intention of hitting me. Had mere murder been the object, the burglar who seemed to enter my apartment at will could have concealed himself within my apartment. True enough I, even hard hit and falling, would have been likely to spin about and kill him. To get close enough to do a good job of killing somebody, one must get close enough in turn to be shot. But I put it down that those bullets had been sent at me for hardly more of a purpose than to make me feel the situation was serious; so serious in fact that I would listen to the unknown woman over the telephone when she wished to make an odd appointment and keep me waiting half the night.

This I had done; and, somehow, the conspirators had probably known that I kept the appointment. Thus I could not possibly establish my whereabouts on the night of the Guerini murder.

These people had not only framed the case in such a way as to cover their own crime and robbery, but there appeared a venomous and diabolical desire to have me helplessly put to death in a painful, and the most disgraceful, way imaginable—by being legally hanged.

However, they had worked up their plot without reckoning sufficiently on my unwillingness to be hanged. It had probably not at all occurred to them that I, fully conscious of my innocence, would resist arrest.

I do lots of things that people don't expect.

ACCORDING to the newspapers, the city was being searched, all trains and ferries watched; men who knew me by sight had been stationed on highways leaving the city, and my description had been telegraphed to all surrounding towns. In other words, the newspapers, as is usual in criminal cases, very thoroughly exposed the plans and precautions of the police. The newspapers also said that the thief, meaning myself, would have great difficulty in disposing of the gems, because many of them were works of art rather than merely precious stones; that is, engraved gems, and would attract attention wherever offered.

Of the Guerinis it appeared that little was known or likely to be known. This proved to be true, and to this day, who they were or from where they came is unknown. The tale that is most generally believed, though purely a guess so far as I know, is that the elder Guerini was a Russian who, being a scholarly authority on jewels had, under the monarchy, been entrusted with the care of a rare collection which, after the revolution, he managed to smuggle out of the country and into America.

I read the newspaper thoroughly, even to the editorial in blazing type that had been written by some fellow, probably the owner himself, who must have been quite excited.

> This so-called Everhard must be caught and hanged! For years he has been a notorious gambler and gunman. He has defied justice and law. Repeatedly he has been exonerated on the plea of self-defense. For years he has been a menace and terror to whatever community it has pleased him to reside in. Because he can draw quicker and shoot straighter than other men he has been privileged to commit murder. To all intents and purposes he is as much an assassin as if he shot from behind a corner—

There was more. I read it all and was not angered. In this world you give and take; and the newspaper owner now held what he thought were winning cards, though there had been a time when I held them. The name of the owner of that paper is well known; it is not so well known that he is something of a blackmailer. At one time his private detectives had stolen from a friend of mine, an attorney, who happened at the time to be preparing a libel suit against this newspaper, certain documents that would, if published, have ruined my friend the attorney. The newspaper owner sent word to him—

"Arrange it so that your client loses his case against me or I will publish these documents!"

The situation came to my attention. I visited the newspaper owner, introduced myself as Mr. Richmond, and told him what I wanted. He invited me to get to —— out of his office. I told him then that though my name was Richmond, I was somewhat better known as Don Everhard. I invited him to consider the fact that I could shoot him, then open his desk drawer, take out his own gun and place it on the floor by the side of his body, and coolly receive the officers with a plea of self-defense. So now in his editorial he had ample reason for calling me a cold-blooded butcher.

Then, on the instant, he became so anxious to be courteous that his tongue trembled, his eyes bulged somewhat, and his knees seemed fairly to rattle together. A gambler who can not bluff is soon reduced to the necessity of honest work, and this scoundrel was quite sure that he was about to be shot. He gave me what I asked for. My friend, the attorney, with great vigor pushed his suit against the newspaper and won his case. Now the newspaper owner wanted me caught and hanged. Moreover, I haven't a doubt in the world but that he thought me guilty of the Guerini murder.

Sitting there by the door in the apartment of the sportsman whom I did not know, I reviewed all angles of the case against me and came to an understanding of just how the matter of the fingerprints had been framed against me. The burglar, at the time he had seemed to help himself to what he wanted, had taken the guns from their case and left them on the table, just as if he had put them there, then forgot to take them.

I distinctly recalled that I had picked them up, one after the other, returned them to the case, and told Ch'lo to put the case away. Then I continued to straighten up the disorder that the burglar had caused. I remembered now that I had noticed at the time that they appeared rather smeared with oil; and I now guessed that Mr. Burglar had smeared them well with oil so that when I handled them I would be sure to leave fingerprints.

Then, of course, some time later Mr. Burglar had revisited my apartment and disturbing nothing else, had taken one of the guns, handling it carefully so as not to mar the fingerprints on it nor leave his own. This gun had then been taken to the Guerini house and fired into the bodies of the men. These days, the police can tell whether or not a certain gun has fired a certain bullet. The murderers knew that, and so had actually fired the gun.

Persons who were ingenious enough to develop so complicated a plot would have been artful enough to handle and fire the gun without marring such fingerprints as they had found on it when it was removed from my room.

If all the evidence they had piled up against me ever got to a jury, I would have absolutely no chance of acquittal.

VI

IT HAD grown dark; not only dark but a heavy fog was rolling in off the bay; and as I stood by a window and peered abstractly at the dull light-spot that marked the corner arc light, I decided that the best thing I could now do was to find out, if possible, where Mrs. Gibbon was staying.

So I telephoned to the local room of one of the morning papers, asked for the city editor, and I told him that I would like to know where Mrs. Gibbon could be found.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I knew a Mrs. Gibbon in New York, a young Italian woman. I am quite sure that this is the same Mrs. Gibbon and—"

"What'd you know of her?" asked the alert newspaper man.

"Oh a very fine woman, indeed. She was married to a distant cousin of mine and I would like very much to see her. I am here only a few days and—"

"She's at the Marshal Hotel," said the newspaper man. "What's your name? Where you stopping?"

I gave him a name and address that seemed suitable, and hung up.

I telephoned the Marshal Hotel.

Yes, Mrs. Gibbon was stopping there. No, she was not in. No, she would see no one.

"Very well, thank you," I said and again hung up.

At the time there seemed nothing better that I could do than go to the Marshal Hotel and, somehow, call upon Mrs. Gibbon. There was, of course, the risk of being seen and recognized; there was, however, the greater risk of being hanged if I did not meet Mrs. Gibbon before the police got hold of me.

The fog was thick; one could see only indistinctly but a few feet away. I raised the window and put out my hand. It was a very wet fog, something like a drizzle; and I am nearly as fastidious as a cat about getting wet. Damp clothes are almost sure to bring on rheumatic-like pains in my weak knee. Besides, a coat would perhaps help keep me from being recognized by a casual observer; it would also serve to give a fairer test to the question of whether or not Mrs. Gibbon would identify me.

I drew the blinds carefully before I turned on the lights so that by no chance, even in spite of the fog, would any one notice that lights were burning in an apartment that was not supposed to be occupied. Then I examined the wardrobe of the young sportsman, whom I wished luck in his Alaskan bear hunt.

I found two raincoats and tried on both, but neither made a good fit. They were tight across the back and pinched under the arms. I must have my arms free so that I can move easily, and quickly.

I returned the coats to their hangers, put out the lights and went to the door, opened it carefully, slightly, and listened. It was then about half past six, or a quarter of seven, and at this time of year it grew dark very early. All was quiet.

In thirty seconds, I reasoned, I could be across the hall, into my rooms, slip into my coat, get back into the hall, then descend the fire escape at the end of the hall and be safely away from the apartment house.

I reasoned, not unwisely, though it afterward made no difference whether I had reasoned wisely or otherwise, that my chances of being unobserved among the evening crowds would really be less than if I tried to slip about the streets later when every one would be more likely to scrutinize whomever he met. The easiest way, always, to escape detection is to mingle with the crowd.

I stepped into the hall, closing the door softly behind me. I did not know but that for some days to come I might wish to make use of the sportsman's apartment, so I wanted to be careful not to give any indication that it had been used. Then I inserted the key into the lock of my own door, and stepped inside, leaving the door open because I expected to come right out.

But almost instantly I realized that some one was in my apartment. My first impulse to back out was checked by the realization that he had no business there, for I had seen the moving gleam of a flashlight pass across the threshold of my living room—one wink of light in the narrow hallway, then it was gone.

Instantly a gun came into my hand. I drew it so instinctively that afterward I could not recall having drawn it. I hesitated a moment, still doubting whether it would not be the most sensible thing to leave noiselessly, hoping not to have been noticed; but I was so sure that I ought to investigate the fellow, that I edged nearer and nearer even as I debated about withdrawing.

Besides, I felt a draft. That meant that a window had been raised, and with the door open the wind came through. My apartment was on the second floor—so high that a tall ladder would have been needed to reach it from the ground; and while it was true that a vacant lot lay below that side of the apartment house, still, I said to myself, one must be desperate to run the risk of raising a ladder.

I knew burglars well enough to know that, these days anyhow, they do not enter houses of the Franciscan type without knowing into whose apartment they are going, and without having definite ideas of what they expect to find. I owned little or nothing of the sort of stuff that burglars like; and yet I was confident that this fellow who had apparently come through the window had known where he was going and what he was after.

This, I felt, must be that same fellow who, with a strange accuracy, knew just when I was out of my apartment and had previously entered it many times. If so, he was one of the very people I most wanted to meet.

I edged forward without being heard. I have had nearly as much experience as some quite good burglars in moving about noiselessly, and I could tell from the slight sound of his movements that he had not heard me enter and was not at all alarmed.

I reached the doorway without having made a sound, paused and peered forward into the room. There the only light was the flashlight, one of the kind that may be turned on with the pressure of a clip and left burning. It lay on top of my desk where the fellow had put it down while he was about whatever it was that he was doing.

HE WORE a cap. His back was toward me. He had a drawer pulled out and was bending over this. I thought, naturally, that he had opened the drawer to search for something, then I saw him pull what looked like an envelope from his pocket and glance at it. Then he hesitated, became rigid, did not move his eyes nor turn his head—at least did not seem to move his eyes in a glance toward me, but stood like a disturbed animal that pauses and listens.

I stood motionless, watching him, waiting to see who he was, what he would do; and though I made no sound, in fact all but held my breath, he must have sensed my presence, for with one continuous movement, almost simultaneously, he straightened, looked toward me and shot.

I was in the shadows, partly concealed, and he could not have seen me clearly; but at that I felt a tug on my arm and afterward found that his bullet had cut the inside of my coat sleeve between my right arm and body. Nobody but a born gunman, one that had been long hunted and had killed more than one man, would have shot that readily. He did not know at whom he was shooting and did not care. I did not want to kill him, at least until after he had been questioned; but I did.

At such a time as that a man, any man, can hardly be said to think; but, as with an experienced racing driver in the midst of a narrow escape, instinct may take the place of thought. And I did then, all in a flash, or at least very quickly, just about what I would have done had I had the time to sit down and plan what was best to do. Two shots had been fired, and the door of my apartment had been left open behind me, so that however quick I might have been, I could hardly have recrossed the hall and disappeared without being seen by any one who flung open a door along the hall and looked out. So I ran to the door and slammed it shut. It locked itself in closing. I knew that it would be some minutes, if not longer, before it could be opened, and possibly, most likely in fact, not until the police had been called. Very few persons care to break into a room where guns have been fired and some one may shoot at them.

The window was up; the curtains swayed inward from the foggy wind. The burglar had entered by the window. I would have to risk leaving the same way and be quick about it.

But I took the time to pick up the flashlight and turn it down upon the man who had fallen as if in a drunken sprawl. He lay almost face down, but I could see enough of his face to be sure that I had never seen him before. His gun lay beyond his outstretched fingers and by his side the envelope, face up, which I had seen him take from his pocket and start to place among the papers in my drawer. The envelop was addressed to me. I thrust it into my pocket to be examined later when I had more time.

Already I could hear excited voices in the hall.

I put down the flashlight on the desk and turned to the window, thrust out my head to look out and down for the ladder I was sure would be there—then instantly drew back. A ladder was there, all right. A rope ladder. It went up, not down.

There was no way out for me unless I used that ladder—or jumped. I had no thought of jumping. But I did have a moment's wonderment as to where that ladder would take me, and whom I might find at the end of it.

When it is necessary to do a thing, I seldom hesitate. I reached out and grasped the ladder, and instantly from over my head I heard an anxious whisper:

"What's happened, Jim? Who'd you croak!"

I looked up. Nothing could be seen in the foggy darkness. The man looking out of the window of the apartment overhead had felt my hand on the ladder and spoken.

Somebody was pounding on the door of my apartment and calling "Who's in there?" and the number of excited voices was increasing in the hall.

To jump would be the next thing to suicidal, and I had a weak knee anyhow. What I dreaded about going up that ladder was not the trouble I might get into after I got up, but the knowledge that if the fellow above discovered that I was not Jim he would have the advantage, could crack me over the head as I came level with his window, or cut the ropes, and my body would be found on the ground—

I had to chance it. Besides, I wanted to see who was in the apartment overhead and to ask some questions. And the best I could do was to make it appear that I was the man Jim. I turned back into the room, took off my hat, tossed it aside, and taking up the dead man's cap, put it on.

I know of few things that give one more the sensation of insecurity than a dangling rope ladder. I have called this rope, but it was worse than that, being of silk, and it felt as flimsy as a spider's web.

Though I was in a hurry, when I had got footing on the thing, I paused to pull down the window, and just on the chance that it might help to mystify the police, I used my handkerchief to wipe the window frame and ledge free of fingerprints. I didn't care to have them suspect where I had gone or how. Then I tried to climb as quickly as I could; which was not very quick, for I am somewhat long-legged, and the loose end of that flimsy ladder waggled about as if trying to avoid my feet.

It was dark against the side of that building, and I felt that the fog would nearly if not completely have shut me off from the view of any one who might even chance to be looking up from below.

From above me an anxious man's voice, hardly louder than a whisper, kept demanding, "What's the matter, Jim? What's the matter? I heard you shoot!"

Then a woman swore nervously—

"—— you, Jim! If you've got us into trouble—"

I felt that the chances were that Jim had got them into trouble; but I was then in no position to say so. That would come later. But I did look up, and I saw that the outthrust heads of the man and woman were only a blur in the darkness. There was no light in the room from which they were staring, and I was somewhat reassured by the knowledge that they could not see me any more clearly than I could see them.

I made no answer. Jim himself, I felt, would not have been likely to do much talking on the way up; and I knew that I had better accept whatever suspicion might possibly be caused by my silence than risk making any sort of reply. So trusting to the darkness and the cap I wore to keep them from suspecting that I was not their friend, I went on.

My ability to climb was so noticeably inferior to that of Jim's that the woman said:

"My ——, you're hurt! What's the matter? Hurry! Why don't you hurry!"

I groaned a little to help her believe that I had been wounded.

"They got him!" said the woman.

"We 're in for it now!" said the man. "We 'll have to cut and run!"

"Shut up!" said the woman. "We've got to help Jim!"

As my head came on a level with the window ledge both the man and the woman reached out and caught my shoulders helpingly. I kept my face lowered, and they thought that I did this from weakness.

I was belly-down on the window ledge, half in, half out, when I felt the woman's hands relax. She stepped back uncertainly.

"Clyde!"—at this almost hysterically alarmed note in her voice, Clyde too stepped back from me—

"Clyde! This is not—"

There I lay, as I said, half in, half out, my feet waving in the outer darkness, one hand reaching down to the floor to help me keep my balance. Had they been quicker witted they could have tumbled me out, but instead of pushing the woman had stepped back, and an instant later I poked forward a gun.

"Not a move!" I said. "I'm Everhard!"

The man said, "Ow!" The woman gasped, drawing in her breath between clenched teeth, and the sound of it was like the hiss of a snake. And before midnight I was to discover that a snake would have been a mild pet by the side of that crook girl.

As disagreeable as it has often been to me to be pointed out repeatedly in public places as "that Everhard," and to overhear whispers about myself, there have been other times when having such a name as mine has been a decided advantage. It was widely known that I could shoot with amazing accuracy; widely believed that I would shoot anybody.

There was no light burning in this room, but an adjoining room was lighted; and their forms were outlined against the glow that came through the open doorway.

I told them to stand closer together, to lift their hands, to take three steps backward, and not to make a move more than that. They did these things, and then being well out of my way, I wiggled across the window ledge and into the room. My entrance was not dignified, for I had to come in head first and face up; but it was an impressive entrance, nonetheless.

I rose to my knees, and from knees to feet, all the while without taking my eyes off them; then with one hand behind me, and my eyes still on them, I pulled up the ladder so that no policeman looking from a lower window would thrust his head against it and grow curious. Then I closed the window.

"Into the next room there. Face about. Keep together. Walk slow!"

They faced about with arms up and walked forward. I kept close behind, and thus we entered the lighted room.

VII

THE man called Clyde was rather short, rather fat, and appeared to be one of those fellows who have been overfed in their cradles by doting parents and left to idle and overeat all their lives. Those who have lived on easy money, though they come by it honestly, show a certain softness of face, a kind of fat-bloat in character. This fellow—I knew there was nothing honest about him—was one of the pig-breed, sleek and polished like a prize porker. His had been a soft life, which is not usual, even among crooks.

He was somewhat foppish, wearing a pearl grey suit on which some tailor had worked to keep out every wrinkle and bulge; he wore highly polished tan shoes, a white silk shirt with blue dots and much jewelry. He had a dainty mustache, hardly more than a subtle suggestion of a mustache, shaved at both ends so that only a little dab of blond fur remained under his small nose. I was sure that except for his fright his cheeks would have been pink.

He looked the idle, lazy clubman, the sort that makes up elaborate salads, having a waiter bring all the ingredients to the table in a café while he putters about in an effort to attract the attention of diners near-by. I knew the breed. He was the kind of man that I detest in much the same way that I detest cats, particularly well fed, sleek cats. One look at him and I knew that I had not reached, or anything like reached, the brains behind the Guerini murder. In fact, as I looked from one to the other of them I thought it even unlikely that either could have been taken very far into the confidence of those who had planned the robbery, the murder and the frame-up. Yet the fellow Jim must have been pretty well into conspiracy, and these were his associates.

The man, a wellfed weakling, might be cruel—weaklings usually are—but he had no courage; not the kind that takes risks or fights when cornered. The man Jim, for instance, was the deadly type of crook; he would take risks and he would fight.

I know now, and soon learned then, that Clyde was a dope huckster, not even that—he didn't even take the risk of peddling it himself, but was a sort of wholesaler; and there is nothing lower in the dregs of hell than the peddlers of dope. Poisoners is what they are.

The woman, I knew at a glance, was the not uncommon type of girl that lurks in the underworld shadows; a young, venomous little ——, ignorant and brainless, but savage in her loyalty and hate. She was the kind who, if angered would do anything, and with hard, sullen stubbornness accept the penalty and refuse to be sorry. She wore a flashy gown, her fingers were covered with jewelry; but these things did not for a minute disguise the fact that she was a little tough. Her young cheeks were plastered with the paste that is a woman's substitute for youthful beauty; her lips were redder than her own blood; her face and neck were covered with powder, and the perfume was as strong as a stench.

Between the two of them there was no doubt as to which was the more dangerous, and, for that matter, admirable. I would rather have had the friendship of one crook-girl such as she than of a regiment of Clydes. But I had no intention of being friendly with either.

The Franciscan was a fine apartment house; people who lived there, whatever their morals, were likely to be rather fastidious and enjoy order and good furnishings; otherwise they would have been as comfortable in a second class lodging house. So at first I was a little puzzled by the disorder and slovenliness of the room we had entered. The fellow called Clyde was too sleek and well tailored to be disorderly; yet this room was upset and apparently had not been cleaned for days. Cigaret butts were scattered about; the rug had small black holes where the discarded cigarets had burned; in one corner was a heap of torn and battered magazines, as if some one had flung each magazine toward the corner when its contents had been read.

In another corner was a small stand and on it a telephone. The bedding was scattered, the sheets exposed and not clean. On the floor was a bag of odd-looking tools, suggestive of the burglar's trade, and a coil of insulated wire that indicated some sort of electrical work had been done or planned. A half empty whisky bottle was on the table, and the polished table was marred with rings and spots where spilled liquor had taken off the varnish. A hypodermic outfit lay open to view in a bright metal case. On the table also were head-phones, and now faint, squeaky voices came out of them, much like the sound that may be heard some feet away through a telephone ear-piece. I thought the head-phones was a radio attachment and, having at the time other things that needed attention, gave it no examination.

I guessed then and learned afterwards that this room was where Jim, like an animal in hiding, had lived. I knew, of course, that any man who would shoot as readily as he had shot at me, was wanted on serious charges and did not dare let his face be seen even by strangers. I learned subsequently that some three weeks before Jim had been introduced into this apartment secretly, by way of the silken ladder through the window, and he had not stirred from the room except to descend to my apartment. His loneliness had been somewhat eased by reading magazines, drinking whisky, and by the presence of the girl who called herself, and perhaps was, his wife.

I lined them against the wall and told them to face it. The man turned readily enough, though with a sort of lingering twist in his short neck, as if uneasy lest I shoot him in the back; but the girl glared at me as if about to tell me to go to the ——; then she too faced about.

I pushed a chair behind the girl and told her to sit down. She did, her back to me and still facing the wall. I then put a chair behind the man. He sat down and, without resisting at all, let me bring his arms behind the chair and tie them. I did this quickly, before the girl was even aware of what I was doing. Then I tied her hands behind her, but not to the chair.

"You," I said to her, "come with me into the next room."

She turned her head, eyed me in stubborn anger, said: "You go to ——! You killed my Jim!"

"Why say I killed him? The people who sent him down there with this"—I took the letter which I had picked from his hand and not yet examined from my pocket—"are the ones who killed him. Besides, he shot first. I didn't want to hurt him. Why would I want to kill off the one witness that could clear me of that murder charge? Somebody else may have wanted him killed off—not I!"

She eyed the letter, eyed me, then demanded:

"What you mean?"

"Just supposing, for instance, that those who sent Jim down there with the letter knew that I would be waiting for him? What do you think that would mean?"

"That's a lie!"

"Figure it out for yourself. He came. I was there—I was there in spite of the fact that I am supposed to be in hiding. The police may be a stupid lot, but don't you think it was rather clever of them to leave me alone while pretending to search the city for me? That sort of threw you people off guard, didn't it? We, the police and I, have played this game pretty slick, don't you think?"

AT THAT she jerked her head and body about and fixed her eyes for a moment on the head-phones that lay on the table. Noticing her glance, seeing that her expression was very odd, amazed, mystified, I realized that there was some significance about those head-phones that I did not understand.

I picked them up, held one to my ear for a moment, and almost at once understood that this was a dictaphone spotted in my apartment. No wonder Jim had been able to tell pretty well what was going on in my apartment and when it would be safe for him to descend.

I could hear voices quite distinctly; three police were there; from their voices I judged that they were angry and mystified. I really wanted to listen, but I had something to say to the girl. It was this:

"Do you suppose that men like Heard and Jones would have let themselves be tied up, as they did this morning, if they had not known you people were listening in? They acted their parts well, don't you think. All right, now come along with me into the next room."

She backed away from me, scowling. She was baffled and suspicious. She believed that the police and I had tricked them; and for us to have tricked them meant that somebody had snitched.

Suddenly she turned on Clyde, furiously:

"You! You! You yellow-hearted snitch!"

What she actually said was much stronger and more vivid than I shall put down; but what I put down will serve to show something of the trend of what she said.

"You didn't like Jim being here! You were afraid,—— blast you! You were afraid of Jim! You snitched so they 'd get him! Oh, I'll kill you! If it's the last thing in this world I ever do, I'll kill you! Don't lie to me! Shut your lying mouth! Turn me loose—turn me loose and let me kill him! Then you can do whatever you like to me! He had it in for Jim! He was afraid of him! They made him keep Jim here, the dirty yellow snake!"

Clyde tried to protest, but she would not listen, and I told him to keep quiet, that he would be all right, that I would take care of him, that the police and I would take care of him.

I didn't expect him to keep quiet, really didn't want him to keep quiet, for the more he tried to protest that he had not double-crossed Jim why, of course, the more she believed that he had. Then, as if anxious to get away from his mere presence, since her hands were tied and she could not attack him, she went readily as I directed into the next room and dropped heavily into a chair. She bit her red lips, swore at Clyde, glowered at the floor.

I had placed her in a chair near the doorway where she could not see in the next room, but where she could hear. I wanted her to overhear what I had to say to Clyde.

"I am going to leave you here alone for a few minutes," I told her, "so I must have some assurance that you won't run."

With that explanation, I began to tie her feet to the chair, and looked out carefully lest she take it into her head to kick; but this sort of protest did not seem to occur to her. She was morosely quiet by the time I had finished, and appeared to be trying to think.

Then I left her.

VIII

IN THE room where I had Clyde tied to a chair, and he was now quiet because I put meaning into the words when I told him to shut up, I again took out the letter I had picked from Jim's hands.

It was addressed to me, in my full and unfamiliar name, McDonald Richmond, Esq. The handwriting was odd, and I suppose that in spite of the flourishes, or because of them perhaps, would have been by an expert called "cultured."

The letter was addressed to me at the Franciscan, postmarked five days previously, and the flap had been closed with wax upon which there was a small seal's imprint, but the envelope had been slit.

Inside was a crisp sheet of heavy linen paper, and written thereon, in the same handwriting as that on the envelope, was this:

> DEAR SIR: My father directs me to confirm by letter what I have already told you over the telephone, at which time you appeared unable or unwilling, to understand that we have reconsidered your application, and do not care to engage your services. I trust, sir, that you may realize that the anger you showed and the nature of the threats you made over the telephone when I first explained this to you, was of such a character as to convince us that you are not in any way suited for the position. I have, sir, the honor to be
>
> Yours very truly,
> LOUIS GUERINI.

At first I was mystified; then the object behind that letter became quite clear. It was meant to establish a personal motive for my murdering the Guerinis. According to the letter, I had made threats; according to the evidence found in the Guerini library, I had fulfilled them. The letter, craftily, purported to disclose that the Guerinis, having rejected my application to be a bodyguard for them, had fear of me. The letter had gone through the mail and had been easily enough intercepted in the Franciscan before delivery. Why it had not been planted in my room when the two gems from the Guerini collection had been tossed under my bed, I could not imagine.

Those crooks knew that the same or other detectives would be back the next day to overhaul my room again to see if there was anything they overlooked. To return a second, a third or even fourth time with a fine tooth comb is one of the things the police do; and the crooks, I don't mean this man and girl I had caught, but the real brains behind the plot, had evidently thought that the police, upon discovering that Guerini letteer among my papers, would be able to deduce reasons satisfactory to themselves as to how it happened that I had not, after receiving such a letter, destroyed it.

In this country of ours, as in many others, no matter what the legal expounders may say about it, the jury always regards a man as guilty until he proves himself innocent; for if there were not a strong presumption of guilt, why should the police have arrested him? The district attorney have brought him to trial? The judge have refused bond? Why? Because everybody believes the fellow guilty.

Take my own case. If brought to trial, would not the burden of proof have been on me? Would I not have had to prove myself innocent? Most assuredly. And I proposed to prove it before I was brought to trial.

Though I must presently confess that I was wrong, I admit that when I had examined this letter I was quite confident that it was a forgery because it was so evidently written merely to strengthen the case against me. And I could not understand at the time why young Guerini would have occasion to write me such a letter. So I said—

"It is a forgery."

Let whoever is skillful at that sort of thing try to imagine what the truth of the matter actually proved to be. My guess was wrong. Even I underestimated the cunning and merciless cruelty of those who had murdered the Guerinis.

Now to get back to what I was then doing. In the room where I had the fellow Clyde tied up, after I had examined the letter, I again picked up the head-phones and, feeling that I had the whole night before me and knowing that it was still early, I listened for some time.

In the midst of the squeaky rattle of voices I could clearly distinguish the rasping hoarseness of Detective Sergeant Jones who chanced to be standing near the concealed dictaphone. He was talking to some one, evidently a police captain, who seemingly had just arrived.

"—no doubt about it, Cap. The stiff's Jim Conners, sure as I'm a foot high! Square through the heart—an' Conners got the first shot, too. Folks heard two shots, an' it's a lead-pipe cinch Conners didn't wiggle his trigger finger after that half ounce o' lead tore into him."

"Good guess—maybe," said the one called Cap. "But why do you lads think Everhard's still here? You don't even know he done it!"

"Who else would a-potted Conners an' run? Anybody else 'd walk up an' say, 'I done it. Now pin a medal on me!' No, Everhard's got a hidin' place in this here apartment. Folks on both sides heard shots and were out in the hall two seconds later. Nobody come out o' this room—so if he didn't come out, he must still be here, hid, somewheres. Ain't that so? That's what the boys are thumpin' around about now. Tryin' to locate that blank-blasted Everhard."

"I don't believe it," said Cap.

"Then where the —— did he go?"

"That's for you boys to find out. But what was Conners doin' here?"

"That's a guess. Mine is—say, you know Conners broke jail in Los Angeles about a month ago. It was an outside job. He was up for murder and it would have been hangin'. Everhard got him out of jail down in Los, brought him up here an' hid him away. That's my guess. I bet you Everhard used him las' night on that Guerini job, see? Everhard got away with them jewels—Conners knew they was hid here, somewhere here in this apartment. Tonight after dark, Conners takes a chance, breaks in here to have a look. Everhard steps out o' his hidin' place, sees what Conners is up to, croaks 'im an' ducks back. See Cap? See how it all fits?"

"Yeah," said Cap with good-natured skepticism. "And I'll believe you've guessed right when you pull Everhard out by the ears. Now listen, Sarg. I've known of that bird for twenty year. Sometimes I think he's square an' sometimes I got large fat doubts. But there's one thing, I've never known him to make a bone-head play. He's one bird that does get away with murder—clear away! Like now with this Conners—we ought to pin a medal on him for that. This Conners was one bad *hombre* with all the fixin's. An' take it from me, if Everhard shot 'im, Everhard's not here now. He's gone! He's been gone 'fore the echoes even begun to die away. That bird's slicker than wet soap."

"But," said Jones angrily, "we've got him on that Guerini job! Them fingerprints don't lie! That's one murder he don't get away with!"

"I know how you feel," said the Cap. "I'd want to hang 'im, too, if he'd left me tied up like that. But don't be too sure you'll cinch him on that Guerini job, either. I'm beginnin' to have suspicions. He's pulled bigger jobs than that Guerini robbery—an' I don't put that one past him. But he's always left himself a way out. And as for that Guerini job, I'm beginnin' to have doubts. Two things are wrong with it. He never left any gun of his layin' on a table—no more 'an he'd a-walked off an' left his fingers. An' he never shot anybody in the back. Don't have to. He can shoot too —— quick at a man's face. Say, he can shoot twice while a cat spits. So—"

"But them fingerprints, Cap!"

"Yeah. If we catch 'im we'll hang him, and he's done plenty to deserve it, so I won't waste no tears—if we catch him. But ——, I've looked for him before on other jobs. When he gets things all framed up nice, he'll walk in by hisself an' say, 'Was you wantin' to see me?' I know that bird. An' ——, he's got friends. The chief an' me was talkin' about it jus' now when this call come in. If there's been one, there's been twenty people, friends of ours, personal friends, call up an' say we're crazy tryin' to hook Everhard with that Guerini job.

"Sarg, you'd be amazed to know the friends that fellow's got among people you'd think wouldn't admit knowin' him! Why, ol' Julius Pachman, the banker hisself, come puffin' into the station this afternoon with a couple o' lawyers. Know what he said? Said it was him give Everhard them automatics and the morocco case for a little Christmas present. Know what he said? He said, 'I ain't sayin' Everhard didn't shoot them Guerinis. I'm sayin' if he did shoot 'em'—he called it 'chootum'—'they had it comin', an' I got the money an' lawyers to prove it!'

"An' Sarg, old Julius pulled this one on me. He said, 'Look here, if Everhard left his gun at the Guerinis, wouldn't he have missed it? Don't a hundred people, jewelers and such, know it's his gun? An' would he have waited there in his rooms for the police to come? Not him. He's got too much brains.'

"An' Sarg, I'm beginnin' to think there's something in what old Julius says. Everhard would have got that gun back or ducked. He wouldn't 've set tight, thinkin' maybe the police wouldn't pick it up and get it identified."

"I'll stand by them fingerprints!" said Jones angrily.

"Well, I'm not hopin' to see him come clear I'm just —— afraid that he will. It's a habit he's got, that fellow. Now I'll just take a look at Conners. I want to make sure he's good and dead, the ——!"

I took off the head-phones and put them aside on the table. I had recognized the one called Cap as a trustworthy honest officer who, somewhat more than most policemen, had a sense of humor.

HOWEVER, I was much pleased that old Julius Pachman should have let gratitude get the better of his judgment. He was a rich man, and rich men are rather timid about coming out in the open on behalf of friends who are under a cloud. Very few bankers would ever admit even knowing one who had been a professional gambler.

His gratitude had come about in this way. A gang of young degenerates, some of whom had been in motion picture work in Los Angeles, had learned certain tricks with the camera that gave them an idea for an easy way to grow rich. They had presented Pachman with what appeared to be a flashlight photograph of himself and a pretty girl who wore less than a spider's web by way of costume; and they invited him to purchase the plate or have copies distributed among his friends, particularly among his wife's friends. As she was from a fine Jewish family and had married him at a time when he was hardly more than a pawn-broker—with no subsequent reason for regret—the poor fellow was greatly distracted. He had the good business sense to realize that if he bought this one faked plate the degenerates would quickly enough fake another and offer it for sale.

"I 'll be goodt as a deadt man vor shame!" he said, when in desperation he had appealed to me, though he hardly knew me.

A certain attorney who had recently won a big libel suit against an evening newspaper had suggested that Pachman call on me.

He begged me to tell him what he could do. And if I would get him out I could write my own check. I looked into the matter; that is, I looked into Pachman's personal life and private morals, for I don't care to waste my time helping rich bounders get out of messes. If he hadn't have been a thoroughly fine fellow he could have fried in his own grease, for all I cared. But the circumstances being what they were, I said I would undertake to clear up the situation at the cost of, probably, a few hundred dollars; and to guarantee that he would never again be troubled by that particular outfit.

Acting as Pachman's agent, I met the fellow to whom the banker was to make payment. Naturally I paid no money to this fellow, but I persuaded him, in spite of his reluctance, to take me to the apartment where all the gang was waiting to divide among themselves the blackmail; and we were accompanied by two taxicabs full of longshoremen hired for the occasion. Big boys they were, who enjoyed a bit of a roughhouse.

We broke in on an astonished lot of depraved crooks, and after first methodically gathering up and shattering all the plates, the huskies started in to wreck the place. I withdrew and left them to their sport.

A riot call was turned in, but the police grew sympathetic when they had examined some of the photographs that the gang had in 'stock,' and gave official approval to the battered heads and broken noses of the blackmailers.

The huskies kept their promise, and would not reveal who had hired them. The police understood that some rich victim had taken that means of evening matters, and rather approved of the idea. The members of the blackmail gang were punished as heavily as possible for dealing in indecent pictures; yet as no one would come forward and lay a complaint of blackmail, they got off rather easily—though the manly beauty of all involved had been more or less permanently marred.

The waterfront men were also arraigned and fined, though in rather a gentle voice by the judge who quite well understood that their fines were being paid by an unknown party. Pachman also paid the landlord twice over for the damaged furniture, and presented me with a blank check bearing his signature. I wrote in the name of a certain orphanage and handed the check back for him to fill in the amount. So that is how some poor kids came to have many modern comforts unexpectedly bestowed upon them, and I got a rather ornate pair of automatics.

All of which has very little to do with the Guerini affair.

But I will add that pornographic blackmailers are somewhat more common than the public at large realizes; and the wisest thing that a victim can do is to go to the police and tell the truth. Blackmail is not only a crime; but the police hate blackmailers as a well bred collie hates a cat.

IX

TO RESUME my story. After I had laid aside the head-phones, I gave attention to the fellow I had in the chair.

I turned him about in order the better to observe his face, for the face often gives more truthful answers than the tongue. I looked at him closely for some minutes, not because I expected to discover anything of advantage by this examination, but merely to help him feel more uncomfortable.

"Your name?" I asked.

"Gyles. Clyde Gyles," he muttered reluctantly, staring with pop-eyed anxiousness.

"Aw, can that stuff!" said the girl shrilly. "You know his name. The snitch! That stall don't get anywhere with me!"

I ignored the girl's interruption, but I could hardly ignore his outburst:

"You're getting me in Dutch! I'll get mine for this, and I didn't give Jim away! You know I didn't! It 's not right! Aw, mister, play fair with me, aw play fair!"

"What are you talking about?" I inquired. "We 'll take care of you, that is if you come through. And as for playing fair, I'd like some of that myself, after the frame you people ribbed up against me."

"Aw, mister, I had nothing to do with that! Honest, I'm telling you!"

"Don't you believe him!" the girl cried. "He was in it, neck deep. He liked it! He didn't like Jim. He was afraid of Jim!"

"This apartment here," I asked. "You rent it? It 's in your name?"

He nodded, vacantly. He was worried, that fellow. He had reason to be worried. The wage of the snitch is death, and I had put him into a bad hole. Precious little I cared about what happened to him.

"You moved in so as to be directly over me! That it?"

His trembling lips mumbled—

"Yes."

"Who told you to move in?"

"Eh—nobody— I just like the place."

"You trying to crawfish now?" I asked. "You might as well come through with everything. The girl's on to you."

He broke out in frantic protest:

"That's a lie! I've played the game square! You're trying to make 'em think I gave' em the double-cross!"

"What do you care what they think? The police and I will take care of you. You count on it!" And I gave him a look that helped him to understand that he had better throw himself upon the mercy of the police than trust to the compassion of his fellow crooks who believed he had snitched.

"Now," I asked again, "who told you to move in here?"

He hesitated, then having a bright idea, said—

"A friend of Renaud's!"

As I had been threatened by the so-called avenger of Renaud, Mr. Gyles did not betray anybody by saying that; but he balked somewhat at the next question:

"The name of this friend of Renaud's?"

"I don't know. That's straight! Honest!"

"What are you trying to do? Turn State's evidence, yet not give anything away? See here, Gyles, you can't play that game."

"I'm not turning State's evidence! I wouldn't! I won't! You 've got me in Dutch! I'd never snitch! I'm not that kind of man!"

"Who was Jim? What's his other name?" I inquired.

"I don't know?" said Mr. Gyles, sullenly —and it was some time before he had the chance to speak again.

Quietly, quickly, I picked up a bath towel, not a clean one, either, and before the fellow knew what I was about, he was gagged, for in opening his mouth to protest I poked a part of the towel into his mouth, then with the muzzle of the gun I rammed his mouth so full of towel that he was silenced.

Then I sat on the edge of the table and held a one-sided conversation, with long pauses, where I have indicated dashes, to make the girl in the next room think that

Mr. Gyles was answering in a low, inaudible voice.

"Now Gyles, as you said, you're in Dutch. You might as well come through with the whole story— How's that?— All right then. But speak up, man. I can't hear you. Now who is that Jim?— How's that? Conners?— Oh, Jim Conners! The fellow that broke out of the Los Angeles jail. Your gang helped him break out, eh?"

From the next room came the girl's shrill voice, abusing Gyles; and he began to have a clear understanding of why he had been gagged. I didn't have any sympathy to give him because I was putting him in a very bad hole—one that would likely prove to be narrow and long and about six feet deep. He was mixed up not only in a cold-blooded murder, but in a plot to get an innocent fellow hanged; and since I was that fellow, I did not care how severe might be the punishment his fellow crooks handed him.

To that savage little crook-girl in the next room I undertook to convey that Mr. Gyles was confessing everything. It was a cool, even chilly night, but his forehead soon became spotted with sweat; and he began making distracting throaty sounds as a man may, even when soundly gagged, but I indicated that if he did not stop those noises I would tap him over the head. In which case I could continue my one-sided conversation as I pleased.

So he sat in agitated astonishment, with his piggy eyes popping wide, and heard me say in a low confidential voice, though not too low to be overheard in the next room.

"You 're right, Gyles. The best way out for you is to come clean. The police were not such dubs as to think that I would go off and leave my gun at Guerini's. So, you see, you people overplayed your hand, How's that? Of course, if you come through with all you know, and are willing to take the stand, the police will protect you. They always do that.

"Of course this morning it helped a lot for us to know about that dictaphone. You saw, or rather heard, how well the detectives played their part. Good actors, those fellows. Threw Jim and the girl there clear off the track, didn't it?"

The crook-girl swore at him. Mr. Gyles writhed helplessly with an imploring stare in his eyes. She would say that with her own ears she had heard him confess, had heard him admit that he had tipped off me and the police about the dictaphone in my apartment. There was no oath under heaven he could take that would make his overlords in crime not believe that he had not turned traitor.

I was not doing all this for the pleasure of giving him a taste of what it was like to be falsely accused; I was trying to put him into such a fix that he would readily see that the best way out for him was to turn State's evidence, tell all he could, and trust to the police to protect him. I wanted to find out what he knew.

I resumed my monologue:

"Let me get this straight. Say it again—oh I see. The first time Conners burglarized my room he stole a few things, put some oil on the automatics and left them on the table so that I would be sure to pick them up and leave my fingerprints. Then a few days later he returned and stole just one gun. That's it, eh? Clever."

As neither the girl nor Gyles could imagine how I knew that, he was more puzzled than she, for naturally she thought that he had told me. So I said to him:

"As you can very well understand, this plot against me isn't nearly so fine as you people thought it would be. We can see right through it. But we want to get hold of the higher-ups. Of course, to-night I wouldn't have come up that ladder, except that I knew I had nothing to fear. But the girl in there was certainly surprized, wasn't she?"

At that she broke out again furiously; and I was sure that Mr. Gyles was beginning to realize that the best thing he could do was to do as nearly as possible what I wanted; for certainly the game of chess is played elsewhere than on the checkered board.

It was just about at that moment that the telephone rang.

X

I AM going to pause a moment to speak of something of which I know very little—the art of warfare; but it is somewhat pertinent in explaining my attitude toward the unexpected situations in which I find myself, and from which I get myself out.

The great war, so I have been given to understand, was fought by German generals who believed that nothing should be left to chance, and that in so far as was humanly possible every move should be planned to its logical conclusion, every situation anticipated, and its emergencies provided for. The French, having less faith in the foresight of even the most far-sighted, observed the theory that there was a vanishing point at which the most thoroughly wrought plan became subject to unforeseeable conditions, and that it were wisest to be on the alert to take advantage of the unexpected situations. In other words, the German generals were expected to follow almost blindly the campaign as ordered by the chief of staff; the French generals were expected to accomplish the purpose of their chief of staff rather than to follow his minute schedule.

The success of the Franco-Prussian war would seem to have justified the German theory; the success of the great war rewarded the French.

In my small affairs, I follow the French theory. I feel that at best a man can see hardly farther than his nose; and having, not wholly without reason, somewhat more self-confidence than most people, I try to take advantage of every new situation. And, as I have said before, what appears to be boldness may be merely a far-sighted form of caution.

I gave that clamorous telephone one look; then, just about as quickly as if I had expected its ring and planned for it, I jerked the gag from Gyles' mouth, cut free his hands and feet, and at the point of a gun took him to the telephone, lifted the receiver and put it to his ear.

Two persons can hear simultaneously over the same receiver; not so well as one, perhaps, but they can hear; and I was more careful to make sure that I heard distinctly than that he did.

I had told him—

"You answer that naturally, then you say what I tell you to say;" and as the muzzle of a gun was poking firmly against his ribs he understood that any symptom of trickery was likely to be fatal.

Once or twice before, with a telephone, I had done much this sort of thing and in nearly soundless whispers conveyed to the person by me what to say into the mouthpiece.

A voice abruptly answered his nervous "hello" with—

"Who's this?"

"Say who you are!" I told him in a whisper, and he answered, "Gyles."

"You sound queer. What's the matter? Anything wrong?" demanded the voice.

The tone was crisp, the voice not pleasant; it was hard, not harsh, and had a modulated accent like that of a cultured person, cultured but ungracious. And frankly, I did not know whether it was a man's voice or a woman's. If I had been compelled to guess whether it was a man trying to talk like a woman, or a woman trying to talk like a man, I would probably have flipped a coin. The telephone does somewhat change the sound of some voices; I should not say change perhaps, but rather that the telephone somewhat emphasizes the characteristics of a voice; that is, the sweet voice is distinctly sweet, the weak voice very weak, the hard tone is emphatically hard. Perhaps this is because one hears the voice and its quality is not modified by facial expression or gestures; anyhow this was a rather peculiar voice, and I was not surprised later to learn that it was a woman's.

It was evident from the first that she regarded Gyles as little more than a servant, not at all a favored servant; and when she had asked—"What's the matter?" he replied at once, of his own accord, "Nothing—I feel—er—funny—kind of sick—got a headache."

"Good!" I whispered approvingly.

But this woman was not interested in Mr. Gyles's complaints. She said—

"I want to talk to Jim."

Gyles glanced at me anxiously. With hardly more than lip movement, I told him to say—

"Not here."

She snapped imperiously:

"Where is he? Have you let him go off some place?"

I indicated the answer for Gyles to make; it was:

"Down below with that—you understand. Not back yet. We're waiting now. Expecting him any minute."

"I'll call again," she said abruptly and hung up.

Gyles was trembling, his lips quivered; the strain had simply frazzled his nerves which, anyhow, were not of the best quality. And it did not add to his composure at about that time to realize that he very nearly got himself shot, for as I replaced the receiver he thoughtlessly reached toward his hip pocket for a handkerchief; and though I had previously searched him and knew that he was unarmed, yet such a move as that is so closely related in my mind with the drawing of a gun that, instantly, my finger was set to pull. The look in my eyes caused him to fling up his arms. Probably the reason I had not shot was because the wise part of my unconscious brain knew that he was neither so daring, nor such a fool, as to try to pull a gun. As those well know who know me, I take no chances; and if he lived to be a hundred he would probably never again have so close an escape.

"Be careful!" I warned him. "And be more careful how you try to lie to me. Who was that?"

He shook a wobbly head. His vocal cords seemed so jangled that he could hardly speak, but he managed to get out:

"Don't know—honest—Renaud's daughter—that's all we know—that's why—you—why she framed you—daughter—you killed her father. That's all—never seen her—honest— It is truth——!"

I believed him. I believed him, not because there was anything particularly convincing in the way he spoke, but because I had known Renaud himself; and he, like most of the brainy crime-chiefs, carefully obscured his identity. It was said that for all the jobs he had directed, and all the years he had been a crook, there were not twenty persons who could have identified him as Renaud. He was crafty, that fellow, and had two or three identities; would even go so far at times as to meet crooks under the name, say, of Tom Jones, and pretend that Renaud had sent him.

I knew that the rascal had once said, many times for the thing had been talked of in the underworld, that the ideal leader—meaning crook leader—was a woman with a man's brain, because a woman, by merely being a woman, could influence men to greater daring than any man; but, said Renaud who knew of what he was talking, every woman, at some time or other, makes a fool of herself over some man—and that destroys the loyalty of all the other men.

Being a small-boned fellow, with rather thin features, he had, by way of disguise, often passed himself off as a woman; though I had never heard of his trying to pass himself off as a woman among his associates. It wouldn't have been unlike him, for he dared anything, that scoundrel. But he was dead. Any man that I shoot twice is so dead that not even his ghost comes back to earth.

His daughter, this woman called herself. I had never heard of his having a daughter, though I knew that he had two or three wives; and an odd thing was that all of them loved him. They had, so the newspapers said—I did not attend his obsequies myself—howled inconsolably at his funeral. But I was willing to believe that this person was of his flesh and blood; she had already done enough to show that she was cunning, cruel, evasive and experienced in his methods. Besides, the fact that she was a daughter would somewhat explain why such emphasis had been put on the threat that an avenger was after me.

She had readily enough told those engaged in this elaborate plot to get me legally hanged that she was Renaud's daughter; thus with two words explaining, and justifying, what would otherwise have been incomprehensible to them; but in saying that she had revealed nothing of herself because her identity—as I was to discover—was hidden under another name, and she was an expert in crime.

Crime has become a great industry, largely because it seems to be no disgrace, but rather an enviable distinction in the eyes of public, bar and court, for lawyers to defend and acquit criminals whom they know to be guilty as charged. Yet there are stupid people who stand aghast with wonder at the cause of the so-called crime waves in this our country. Our judicial system may not have been designed to benefit crooks, particularlyy rich crooks, but it serves their needs very well; and if convicted there is usually a prison board—that will turn them loose; and the loosening is often done secretly lest there be a public uproar.

Renaud himself would have been delighted with the cunningly elaborate plot his daughter had devised to avenge him. He was given to that sort of thing; though nothing of his that I knew of had been so elaborately complicated—but his plans were usually more successful.

And no doubt she would have been very amazed to know that in her brief conversation with Gyles she had made a misstep, a blunder, that was likely to get her into trouble.

She had said that she would call again in a few minutes.

I TOOK up the receiver, asked for chief operator, and I do not feel that I was very inaccurate in saying to her:

"Chief operator, I am talking for Detective Sergeant Heard at headquarters. The police have reasons for wanting to know about whoever calls this number. Will you please do what you can to locate the source of every call that comes in here tonight and let me know as soon as the party hangs up?"

A bright girl, that chief operator—perhaps woman, or she may have been a grandmother for all I know. I never saw her, though I learned her name.

Then I held conversation with Mr. Gyles. It was about as much of a monologue as ever. This is what I told him:

"When she calls, you can be as natural and excited as you please. Tell her that you heard shots below, that you waited as long as you dared, then drew up the ladder. Tell her that there has been such confusion in the room below that you haven't been able to get much over the dictaphone; but tell her that Conners is dead, the police are there, and that they think Everhard killed him."

Gyles was sweating and gasping and shivering; an idea was working about in his head like the ferment of yeast, and being naturally a coward, he was terrified by what was to him a daring decision.

He said that he was going to "come clean," to turn over all he knew to the police; that he had been against this frame-up all along—which was no doubt a lie—and did I think the police would let him off?

"I never heard of the State hanging its witnesses," I told him. "You don't stand a chance in the world of being turned loose. And the lightness of your sentence will somewhat depend on how much you know. Tell it to me."

That confession of his was just what I had been working for; but when it came it was worthless, for I already knew or had guessed at everything of any importance that he had to tell.

He was a jobber in dope; he made money at it and had an easy life and no risks; the fellow who furnished him with his wholesale supply of dope—a fellow named Tom; that, said Gyles, was all he knew of Tom, except that he was a fine-looking man—had one day told him to move into this apartment; that it was to be leased.

So he had moved in. Then Tom had given him a rope ladder, with instructions that on a certain night it was to be lowered. He had followed instructions and Jim Conners had come up. Conners was a savage, rough ——. Gyles had been afraid of him. In the same way a few nights later the girl had entered the apartment. They had been there ever since. They had told Gyles what they were up to, and promised to take out his heart and let him look at it if he made a false move. They had said Renaud's daughter was after me, Everhard. Occasionally she telephoned to Jim.

It was Gyles who had carried out my automatic after Jim fetched it, and Gyles had given it to Tom. Jim, who was clever at that sort of thing, had spotted the dictaphone in my apartment, not only so as to be better able to tell when I was there, or rather out, but so as to overhear in case I, by some chance, got wind of what was being planned against the Guerinis. Gyles said he knew nothing about the murder. He did not know whether or not the housekeeper was in the plot. They had not confided with him. Practically all he had learned had been from Jim, and then only when Jim was half drunk and snarled at Gyles.

Gyles went so far as to say that he was glad Jim was dead.

At that I made a gesture, silencing him, and I listened, expecting an outburst from the next room; but there was no sound.

Quickly, but not at all forgetting to keep an eye on Gyles, I stepped back and looked through the doorway. The chair was empty. The girl had got herself loose. She was gone.

She had, I guessed, taken advantage of my attention's being wholly absorbed by the telephone; and, perhaps having the sort of soft double-jointed hands, or whatever one may call the sort of hands that can be compressed until they will slip from a handcuff or knot on the wrist, she had got her fingers free, then untied her ankles.

"Out of the room to give the alarm!" was my first thought.

I glanced toward the front door. This had been fitted with bolts to resist the entrance of any one who might happen to have got the key from the office. No doubt

Jim Conners had taken that precaution to prevent being surprized. The bolts were closed. She had not gone the front way. I looked toward the window through which I had made my entrance. It was closed, and the ladder lay on the floor.

I examined the closets; the doors of both were closed, and I was sure that she was in neither because the keys were outside. All this while I kept a good lookout on Mr. Gyles.

There would be, of course, another exit from the kitchen. I would see what was to be seen there; and not caring to take the time just then to tie Mr. Gyles up again, particularly since he had declared himself willing to serve the police, I marched him along before me.

IT WAS he who opened the kitchen door, inward, and started to step through. I, being behind him and somewhat taller, saw clearly, if one may call seeing clearly something that began and ended in a blurred flash: a thin, sinewy bare arm darted upward and struck down, and the thin blade of a butcher knife was driven to the hilt into the body of Gyles. His gasping yell was strangled, and he fell staggeringly back against me. The blade had been driven so deep, and the handle was so smooth, that as the girl tried to pull the blade from the falling body, her hand slipped off.

Instantly her thin wild face, which had shown a fierce intensity, took on a look of fright.

However it was not in any sense luck that saved me, if by luck one means a piece of good fortune that comes accidentally. I would have been buried and forgotten twenty and more years ago if I had made a practise of opening and entering doors as other people do. So strong has the wary habit become that even when I am neither uneasy nor suspicious, I open almost every door and let it swing clear back as far as it will go before I step inside; and as it swings back, I instinctively glance through the crack between its hinges. In this manner I have trapped more than once some inexperienced person who thought to catch me off guard. I am never off guard. I may be taken by surprize, but never have been caught in what is to be called a helpless situation.

This girl could now neither close the door against me nor escape; and her hands were empty.

A little suspense is more likely to rattle and confuse excited, desperate persons, than action which may arouse them, give them something definite to resist, however hopeless the resistance.

She, not knowing what I meant to do, because I said nothing, merely looked at her, grew frightened; her eyes wavered with increasing alarm from my face to the gun in my hand; and so we stood for some minutes, for she had no way of knowing that I did not mean to speak first. In any kind of deadlock the one who makes the first move, says the first word, accepts the disadvantage.

Thoughts must have swarmed in zigzag flight through her brain, like frightened bats; and at last she cried:

"I meant to get him! The dirty snitch! He framed Jim!"

Cleverly put, but I knew that she had meant to knife me. She had struck as the door opened, almost bindly, thinking naturally that I would be the first to enter; but at that I know she had no regrets for what she had done, though perhaps some for what she had failed to do. With me out of the way first, it would have been easy for her to settle with Gyles.

"Yes," I nodded, "you do this sort of thing like one who is used to it. But I never use a knife. That's one thing that made the evidence in the Guerini murder weak. They were stabbed, those Guerinis. Who did it? *You?* This"—I indicated Gyles—"will help the police think so, anyhow."

Probably the oldest device under heaven, and certainly one of the best, for making a person tell the truth is to accuse him, or her, of something worse than they are suspected of having done.

She gave me an astonished look of horror.

"The same people," I said, "who framed this thing against me will not hesitate to throw you to the police when they learn that the frame-up against me has fallen through. It was you and Jim Conners who killed the Guerinis. He's dead and you are a prisoner. You see if Tom, the dope pedlar, and Renaud's daughter don't do what they can to help the police think so."

She stared at me and shook her head slowly, doubtfully, saying:

"I didn't. I don't know who did. But they won't throw me over! And if I'd known how to get word to 'em, I wouldn't have stayed here—not even to kill him, like I wanted!"

"But more than that, you wanted to get me. I understand. I don't blame you. But Mr. Tom and Miss Renaud, even if they want to help, are not going to be able to do much for you."

She glared sullenly, and said sullenly—

"I won't squeal!"

"Suit yourself."

"I never killed the Guerinis!"

"There'll be a jury for you to talk to."

"I ain't got a record!" she said defiantly, meaning that the police had no old charge or conviction against her.

"Here's murder"—I indicated the body between us—"cold-blooded. And I'm the witness. You do as I want, and if it comes to a trial—I won't promise that you get off, but I'll go so far as help you get off with manslaughter."

Which, I felt, was no more than right, since she had not really meant to kill him. She had meant to kill me.

She was a strange, vicious, untamed and untamable little savage; but she was wise enough to realize the difference that my story could make in court.

In a sneering sullen way she asked—

"What you want of me?"

"When the telephone rings I want you to answer it. I wouldn't ask a girl like you to tell a lie, so you can tell as much of the truth as you want—as long as you don't say that I am here, in this room. Is that clear?"

I write her answer as "Ye-a-ahz," for the sound she made by way of reply was very much like that, being as insultingly defiant as she could possibly make it.

Which shows what a little fool she was, for had she wanted to fool anybody she should have pretended to be badly shaken and eager to get off easily; not that she would have fooled me, however she acted, but such a sneer was as much a warning as the snarl of a wildcat.

Perhaps I feel some prejudice against her because a moment later, with eyes flashing and lips drawn back over her teeth, she made some remarks intended to hurt my feelings. Her voice took on a throaty, sneering hoarseness:

"You, you big four-flusher! Gunman—bah! You're a stool for the cops! My Jim'd shot —— out of you, but you got 'im in the back. Give me a gat an' I'll shoot it out with you! Jus' try me! Jus' try me! I dare you! I know you, you tinhorn card shark"— and so on.

What she hoped to gain by all that I don't know, and neither did she; but it eased her anger somewhat, and she was very nearly in tears before she had finished; angry tears they were, what there was of them.

For that matter Jim was a good, or rather a bad, gunman. He was quick, but not as accurate as a man should be. I made no sort of reply, but listened as patiently as I could; and though she watched intently, I don't think she saw my face change color or twitch.

XI

THE telephone rang.

"You tell the truth, if you want. But not too much of it. Or if you don't want to answer the phone, say so! And I'll do it myself."

"Aw, I'll do it," she said sullenly, but I suspected that she meant to try to play a trick. But I didn't care.

I stood behind her, and held the receiver to her ear with my own bent low.

A woman's voice, the same voice as before, said at once:

"I want Jim."

"Jim's dead!" said the girl, and her voice had in it a kind of shrill anguish. "They got him down there! That dirty Gyles double-crossed 'im! I croaked Gyles! And now Everhard is—"

Then I did exactly what I had planned to do when she began to say more than I cared to have her say. I jabbed the muzzle of the gun so hard against her ribs that, really hurt, she cried out; and as I pushed her aside I slammed the receiver back on the hook.

The girl recovered her balance and glared at me with a kind of frightened indignation, and rubbed at her side.

"Fine work!" I told her approvingly. "Just what I wanted you to do, only I knew you wouldn't if I told you to. You've got that woman excited now, and she'll try to get this number again for an hour. In that way we can find out who she is. She'll either come up here herself, or send somebody to find out what's happened, which is just what I want. I shall most assuredly tell the police that you didn't mean to kill Gyles!"

She was furious, believing that she had played into my hands; and for that matter, she had, since I, following the French theory of warfare, had tried to turn a new situation to my advantage.

I, keeping my eyes attentively on her, then lifted the receiver and jiggled the telephone. The watchful chief operator answered at once, and said:

"The party you cut off is trying to get you again."

"Tell her presently," I said, "and every one else who calls, that there in no answer. But I shall value it if you give me the source of every attempt to get this number. Three short rings and I will answer. From where did this call come?"

It must be remembered that the chief operator thought I was a police detective. She gave me the name of a certain well-known hotel, and showed an alert mind by saying:

"The party is now in a public booth at the hotel. I have the hotel operator on the wire. She can't identify the party herself, but says that she is calling a house detective.

I waited, holding the receiver, and continued to keep an eye, two eyes, on the girl that stood before me; and during the pause of waiting I told her:

"I don't know what you are up to, but you have edged backwards an eighth of an inch at a time for about six inches. Now take one full step this way, then stand still!"

With much the same expression and tenseness of a leopard that moves resentfully for fear of the lash, she took a full step and stopped. It seemed to me that bits of fire actually sparkled in her eyes. She was infuriated and afraid, for though I held a gun without any particular air of menace, the muzzle was toward her and did not waver.

While I was holding the receiver, waiting, the switchboard girl at the hotel had called one of the house detectives who loitered near the booths until the woman finally gave up trying to establish contact with Gyles' apartment, and came out.

She appeared somewhat agitated. The detective recognized her as Mrs. Bernice Forgues, who, though not now a guest at the hotel, had formerly stopped there. She left the hotel immediately in company with a Mr. Tom Jordan, a well known man-about-town. Both Mrs. Forgues and Mr. Jordan appeared somewhat perturbed and anxious.

That most perspicacious of all telephone operators had made inquiries of the hotel in the name of the police, thus receiving much attention; and the report I got from the house detective over the wire was given without question. The house detective gave me his name so that "we" of the police department might remember and some day return the courtesy. He inquired diplomatically as to what was up, and learned that we, meaning the police, had nailed some crooks who were known to have connections with supposedly reputable persons; and for that reason we were watching all calls that came in for this number so that we might investigate the standing, business and character of those who tried to communicate with what was now known to be a crook-nest.

"Anything I can do at any time, Sergeant," he said.

The chief operator had apparently misunderstood me to say that I was Detective Sergeant Heard.

XII

IN MAKING the crook-girl cry out, as I had done, then hanging up, I had put Mrs. Forgues, whom I believed to be the vindictive daughter of Renaud, in a situation that, while it may have alarmed her, have even warned her of danger, nevertheless would make her so desperately anxious to find out what had happened that she would somehow betray herself. She would not again be able to get in touch with the apartment by telephone; discreet inquiries would assure her that the police had not been called to the Gyles apartment; and she would learn, if her abilities to make inquiries were as good as I suspected, that not even the apartment house management was aware of anything wrong. I hoped that her anxiety and mystification would cause her to do something that would enable me to find out where she could be found.

And after I had finished my talk with the hotel detective, I hung up the receiver, and in doing so I glanced toward the hook. At that moment the girl, who had been waiting for me to take my eyes off her, jumped at me.

Had she been out of her head, and perhaps she was a little, she could not have done anything more crazy. No man, however desperate, would have done it—could have done it without getting shot, for I would have pulled the trigger at point-blank range. But she had luck with her. I have on an occasion or two shot past the head of some woman to help her get the idea that it was dangerous not to do as I said; but I would about as soon shoot a child as a woman, which is one reason, perhaps, why women have always been able to cause me more trouble than men. For the most part, women are easily bluffed; but this girl, like the wild animal that she was, called my bluff.

Consider the cat, a small weak animal, the house pussy that a child mauls and pulls by the tail; yet a man, however strong, will be hard put to handle a mad cat. And this was now just about what I had on my hands.

I didn't know what to do with her, or for that matter how to do it. The Franciscan apartments were nearly sound proof, the space between floors and walls being heavily padded with felt, so that the racket we made was not likely to attract attention. She had locked her arm about my right arm, and held on ferociously; her energy was explosive, she seemed tireless, and she tried to bite and scratch—did severely scratch one side of my face. It was, I admit, about the least dignified of any situation in which I had ever found myself. I had no cause to be alarmed, for the struggle could have but one ending, yet I was confoundedly uncomfortable.

I shall not say how long this thing went on, though not for long; yet she did much damage to my appearance. Then the telephone began to ring, three short rings, insistently; and I did then very reasonably grow alarmed lest, if I did not answer, the chief operator would call the police station and tell the astonished officers there whatever it was that she had just learned. In something of desperation, I dragged the furious girl near to the telephone, with my left hand knocked away the receiver, and getting my face somewhere near the mouthpiece, shouted: "Just a minute, please!" Then I cast aside the gun that the girl was struggling to get into her own hands, and with both my own hands free I soon made a different story of that struggle. I jerked her backward, off her feet, dragged her across the floor and into the next room, and literally threw her into the closet which I had left open after inspecting it some time before when searching for where she had gone. I slammed shut the door and turned the key.

If those who have been malicious enough to speak of my "tailored serenity" could have seen me then, they would no doubt have been well pleased.

"Yes? Now what is it?" I said, a bit short of breath, into the telephone. The chief operator was excited. She had heard the commotion. "Yes," I told her, "we have been having a little scene. One of the prisoners we are holding here decided to create a little excitement. But everything is quiet now."

That is what the chief operator then told me:

Just a few minutes before a woman—the voice seemed to be that of Mrs. Forgues; and as I have said, she had a peculiarly distinctive voice—had tried again from the booth of such and such a drug store, to get the apartment; not being able to make connection she had immediately dropped a coin again into the slot and called a certain residence number. This most competent of all telephone operators had been, in fact still was, a stenographer, and took down the conversation that "we" of the police might have accurate information from which to make our own deductions.

A man answered from the residence number; and the woman had said at once:

"Fletcher, something is wrong with Gyles and Jim. I was talking to the girl when she screamed, and I haven't been able to get the number again. Central says there is no answer. She said Jim had been killed, that Gyles did it. Also she mentioned the name of *that* man—you know?—the one the police are looking for. I have got to know what has happened. Tom and I are coming right home, but you, Fletcher, you must, right away send somebody over there to find out what has happened. Get one of your men to the police station, and see what *they* know. This looks bad, Fletcher, and you'd better be careful. We are coming right home."

Then Fletcher had said:

"I'll get in touch with somebody right away, and learn what's happened. Louise is here and wants to see you. She's right here. You want to talk to her?"

"All right, yes," said Mrs. Forgues.

Then a woman's voice took the place of Fletcher's—

"Hello dear?"

"How are you darling? Anything wrong?" asked Mrs. Forgues.

"No sweetheart, only I just had to see you. I feel—I don't know, I feel uneasy."

"Don't worry, dear. Everything will be all right. Tom and I will be right home. Good-by."

So it appeared that I had jarred the cautious Miss Renaud, alias Mrs. Forgues, into certain indiscretions over the telephone. True enough, she could hardly have imagined that so careful a watch was being kept. But those who work with crime may be compared to persons who creep along the narrow ledge of a precipice: Though they move with caution and take a thousand sure-footed steps, yet one stumbling slip and they fall.

Whether or not Mrs. Forgues was Renaud's daughter, and I was confident that she was, it seemed to me necessary that I should meet her as soon as possible. For one thing, I was afraid lest she, discovering how badly I had broken up the network of her plot against me, might grow frightened and vanish.

The chief operator had given me the address of the house to which Mrs. Forgues telephoned in saying she was coming right home; so I saw that if I could reach the house during the next hour or so that I would be likely to find her there. It was now very nearly eleven o'clock. I had been something over three hours in Gyles apartment.

I picked up the head-phones, listening for that the dictaphone might tell me, but heard nothing. There was silence in the apartment below. I raised a window and leaned far out into the fog and looked down. No windows in my apartment were lighted.

Then I changed the hooks on the rope ladder, adjusting them so that the length of the ladder, when lowered, would reach the ground.

The night was filled with a thick wet fog; but now having a definite plan in mind, and feeling the need of hurrying, I did not forget but ignored the fact that I would get wet and tomorrow have a stiff leg and some pain.

I paused to look into a mirror, and regarded myself as something of a stranger; my hair stood out on end as if I had rumpled it to play the part of a madman in a show; one cheek had the red marks of the wild girl's claws, and a few drops of blood had trickled and dried on my face; my collar was torn half off, and my coat ripped.

I felt uncomfortable for I am rather fastidious about my appearance.

I carefully let down the rope ladder, tested the hooks to make sure that they were firmly attached to the inside of the window ledge, then crawling out backward, began my descent, going slowly, cautiously as a thief, lest any noise against the side of the building attract the attention of persons who might be in my apartment. When on a level with the window of my room, I paused and listened; but there was only silence within and no light.

I descended to the ground and quickly moved off into the foggy darkness, making sure to be well away from the apartment house in case a policeman or two might be patroling about in the hope of discovering just what they would have discovered had they found me.

I got to a street and walked quietly, and the time or two that I heard persons coming I stepped from the sidewalk and let them pass. I noticed with no satisfaction that there were very few automobiles out. Finally I came to a corner when I decided to wait. Two or three automobiles went by me, and though none were going fast—the fog blotted the headlights—they went straight ahead. I am patient, but it seemed to me that I was having to wait a very long time; yet there was nothing better that I could do, for, with my disreputable appearance, any attempt to summon a taxicab to a drug store or hotel would almost certainly get me into difficulties.

FINALLY there came a touring car which slowed down to make the turn at the corner where I waited. One jump and I landed on the running board. The driver was alone. He was so startled that he hit the curb, stalled his motor and flung up his hands. I opened the door, got in beside him and said:

"Nothing is wrong. I merely want to ask you to drive me a few blocks—about three miles, maybe four or five—if you don't mind?"

"Er—not at all—glad to."

"And though I am in a hurry, I want you to drive carefully."

He recovered his self possession quickly enough; and I, making the guess from the professional cut of his beard, asked if he were a doctor; and he said that he was.

"Going to or coming from a patient?" I asked, not because I had any intention of letting him hurry to a patient, but because I would feel better about it if I knew that I was not endangering the life of a sick person.

He hesitated as if calculating what a good lie might do for him, then said with a sort of cheerful nervousness:

"Neither. I'm on my way home from the club. But that's not what I'll tell my wife!"

I asked—

"Have you any idea who I am?"

He gave a lingering glance at my face, then said—

"From the marks on your face, I would say that you are a married man, too!"

I assured him that he was a close observer, but that in this case it was a cat that had scratched me. He said, "Yes"; and with a sly twist of mouth added that in China men believed that foxes could turn themselves into beautiful women and get married, but in America we discovered that we were likely to be hoodwinked in the same way by cats.

He pleased me so much by not being a coward or a fool, that I asked for his card and put it in my pocket.

I am known by sight to so many people that, in spite of my messy appearance, I had a suspicion that the doctor knew or made a guess as to who I was. This would not be unlikely since the newspapers had been filled with my name and the fact that I was a fugitive; so of course the first thing that he would do when I left him would be to telephone the police. Knowing that, I would need to take certain precautions to prevent interference from the police.

I knew the city very well, but not well enough to know what cross-streets would pass near the house, the number of which had been given me by the chief operator; and the distance was considerably more than three, four or five miles, as I was quite well aware. When we came to the street on which the house stood, I told him to get out, as I had required him to do two or three times in reading the sign posts, and go up to a house and see its number. I thought that if I got out to investigate for myself that he might drive off—as he presently did; but when he did so, I intended that he should.

It happened this way: After he had told me the number of the block we were in, I kept count of the cross-streets until, if my calculations were correct, we were within two blocks of the house I wanted to find. I thought it now time that I get out and make the approach on foot; so I said—

"Draw up here at the curb and wait. I am going to see for myself just where we are."

I had not gone twenty steps before he took the chance of being shot at, and with grind and clash of gears got under way and speeded up. No doubt he felt that I was very short-sighted to be so easily tricked.

I had no knowledge at all of this neighborhood beyond the fact that it was a rather fashionable district. I knew of course that when streets run north and south that the odd numbers are to be found on the west; and I was somewhat assisted in identifying the house that I was looking for by the fact that many of its windows were lighted downstairs and up. The fog was very thick. A man could hardly be seen half way across the street, if so far. The windows were lighted, though some blinds on the lower floor were drawn, which indicated that those within were up at a late hour. But, under the circumstances, I had not expected the household of Mrs. Forgues to be sleeping.

It was one thing to find the house; another and more uncertain thing to get inside without alarming and perhaps scattering into flight the very persons that I wanted to meet. I could have got in easily enough, and got out too, but I did not want to make a commotion that would leave me no wiser than before.

I went clear around the house, trying every door, moving furtively as a thief. As the porch light was not on, I tried even the front door, for if I could have walked in quietly I would have been willing to risk what followed; but if I rang the door-bell, everybody within would be on watch.

At the rear of the house I made out the hazy glow of a lighted window over the garage.

That would be, of course, where the chauffeur lived. Perhaps he was there. Something might be learned. A good general—so my reading of history has informed me — will consider the weakness of an enemy's rear as carefully as the strength of the enemy's front; and I, perhaps like many a general who has got himself a reputation for far-sighted strategy, ventured to attack the rear not because it was far-sighted, but because there appeared to be nothing else that I could do.

The driveway leading from the street to the garage ran past the house, and a cement walk led from the rear of the house to the door that opened on the stairs which led to the rooms over the garage. This door was not only unlocked but ajar; and I said to myself, "It appears that whoever is up here has a clear conscience," for crooks are seldom at ease and like to feel that the doors between them and whoever may come unexpectedly are locked.

The stairs were dimly lighted. The light came from a room overhead. I heard a man clear his throat, then there were a few slight sounds, the scrape of feet, the faint rasp of a match, and a moment later the rattling *tick* of the match stick's fall as it was thrown aside.

And I said to myself:

"These stairs are sure to be squeaky. All stairs are when you wish them silent; and sounds carry so well in this place that I have about as much chance of moving up them unnoticed as a wicked man has of sneaking into Heaven."

So up I went, neither slowly nor hurriedly, but as naturally as possible. Whatever the fellow up there might think, it would not be that I was trying to sneak upon him nor to rush upon him.

XIII

WHEN I had reached the top of the stairs no one was in sight, but through the nearest doorway, which was open, came a man's voice:

"——, but I'm sleepy, Mr. Fletcher. An' she's goin' want the car again so I can't—"

I stood in the doorway, and his idle glance fell upon me and the gun in my hand. The chauffeur wore a neat dark suit of somewhat military cut; his feet were cocked on the table and he was leaning back in a tipped chair with a book in his hand and a cigaret in his mouth. He nearly fell over backward; the cigaret dropped from his mouth and in withdrawing his feet from the table, he knocked off and scattered the package of cigarets.

"Who's up here with you?" I asked.

He could hardly talk, but said:

"No one. I thought you was Jerry. Say, what you after? I ain't got anything to steal an'—"

"Police!" I said, and watched carefully to see how that sounded to his ears.

He appeared astonished but not frightened, and repeated doubtfully—

"P'lice?"

"I've had a little trouble tonight"—I was explaining my disreputable appearance—"and I think you're probably friendly with some of the people I'm looking for."

"W'y, mister, I ain't done anything! W'y, what's the matter?"

He was a young fellow, a clean-looking simple sort of boy. When he stood up I could see that he was tall, well built, and carried himself erectly. As nearly as I could judge there was not the faintest mark of the crook about him, and I am a pretty good judge of men. Women are different, though I am a good judge of their characters too—and distrust them all.

"What's your name?" I asked.

"Will Hammond."

"Whom do you drive for?"

"Mrs. Forgues."

"You live up here alone?"

"Yes sir."

"Who's Fletcher?"

"Oh just a feller—lives there in the house. Sometimes he comes up here and sets and smokes a minute."

"A servant?"

"I guess so. Sort of boss. Sort o' runs things for the missus."

"Name's Jerry? Jerry Fletcher?"

"That's his name; but say, mister, you don't suspect him? What's this? A booze raid or what?"

"Perhaps," I told him. Then, "Mrs. Forgues is going to use the car yet tonight?"

"That's what I was told."

"Who told you?"

"Mr. Fletcher, oh long time ago. I been settin' here readin'. 'R tryin' to. I was asleep till jus' before you come. I thought you was him."

He was somewhat larger than I, not much, but some; and a great deal younger; but what I then thought of seemed worth the risk.

"Out of your clothes!" I told him. "And quick about it!"

And even as he stood there for a moment gaping rather blankly, I ran a hand over his hips, down his sides, across his breast, making sure that he was unarmed; he was, and I regarded that as in his favor.

He frowned, puzzled, not at all combative, simply mystified; then—

"Say, if you're from the p'lice, let me see your badge!"

"This serves!" I moved the gun.

He stared at the gun, nodded—"You're not from the police."

"I'm Everhard," I told him; and that apparently explained matters to his entire satisfaction, for he began hurriedly to undress and watched me a bit apprehensively.

When he had undressed I made him get into bed and tied his hands and feet.

There was a little box telephone on the wall. I asked if that was an outside phone or merely connected with the house. He said with the house. Then to make sure I lifted the receiver, but there was no response from Central, so I knew that he had told me the truth.

I changed into his clothes. They did not fit well, but were not preposterous. His was a double-breasted coat with large bone buttons.

"Now I advise you to tell me the truth. Otherwise some of your friends are likely to get hurt. When they ask for the car, do you stop on the driveway and wait or do you go up and ring the bell?"

"I just wait. But what do you mean to do? You ain't goin' to try to—"

"Yes. I shall try to pass myself off as you. And to keep you from making any unnecessary noises, I shall have to tie something over your mouth."

And when I had fastened the gag, I explained:

"I must have a private conversation with Mrs. Forgues. There are some things I want to ask her—and tell her."

Then I sat down and patiently waited for the summons to bring out the car.

XIV

THE telephone rang. I did not jump to answer it, but waited until there was a trace of impatience in the ringing. I felt that if the party calling me would get out of patience and speak angrily that he, or she, would not then be so likely to notice any dissimilarity between my voice and the chauffeur's. I said—

"Hello!"

Instantly a woman's voice, recognizable as Mrs. Forgues, said harshly:

"What's the matter with you? You've been asleep!"

I mumbled apologetically.

"Bring the limousine and hurry about it!"

She hung up.

The garage door was unlocked. There were two cars. The limousine was a costly automobile of well known make. I had never driven one of that make. The motor was so silent, the vibration so imperceptible, that I thought I was having trouble in getting the motor started even after it was running. I experimented until I knew which was the switch for the courtesy and which for the dome light; but I did not turn on the light by the speedometer, preferring to keep myself in as much darkness as possible. Noiselessly the car moved out along the driveway that ran by the house, and I stopped before the steps leading down from the front porch.

I stopped there.

Almost at once the front door opened and four people came out. The porch light had not been switched on, but I watched as closely as I could as they came through the doorway with the light to their backs. There were two women and two men; but only one of the women had on a hat and coat; the other had a shawl thrown over her head, and neither of the men had hats in hand or top coats.

I had, of course, expected that it was Mrs. Forgues who would make use of the car; but by her voice I recognized that she was not the woman dressed to go with me. I had got out of the seat, opened the limousine door and stood well back. I was just thinking over whether or not to present both guns and invite myself into the house. In fact, I came to the conclusion that this was the thing to do, but as there was no need for haste, I waited hoping to overhear something enlightening from their conversation.

I could not see their faces at all well, even with the courtesy light burning, but I sensed that they were not happy; their words indicated that they were anxious to hear some news about something. Mrs. Forgues emphatically said everything would be all right. She also said—

"I know the Marshal isn't a very charming place for you to stay, but it wouldn't do for you to be at the Palace of St. Francis."

There was a sort of considerate affection in Mrs. Forgues's voice that seemed to me very unlike her. Evidently this woman was one for whom she had a real liking.

I was glad that she mentioned the name of the Marshal, for I recalled it as the hotel where the Guerini housekeeper was stopping. In fact, when I had left the apartment of my neighbor who was hunting bears, it was with the intention of calling at the Marshal. I then decided that if I was lucky enough to drive off without any one's suspecting me of being other than I appeared to be that I would take advantage of the chance now to question this woman whom I believed to be the Guerini housekeeper.

No one had given the slightest attention to me. I stood near, holding the door open in the rather military way that I have noticed in chauffeurs, and I had particularly noticed that Mr. Hammond, whose place I was taking, was quite erect. Then, largely because I wanted to see what the women were like, I turned on the dome light; but instantly the one whom I took to be the housekeeper said:

"No, no. Put out the light."

"Put out that light!" said Mrs. Forgues peremptorily, and I switched off the light; but I had seen enough to understand why the reporters had called her "beautiful" and "refined." She was pretty, delicate and dark.

This is what then happened: Mrs. Forgues and the woman she called Louise kissed and embraced each other, and used such endearing terms that I was quite convinced that Mrs. Forgues probably hated the woman and had some mischief in mind. For once, however, I was entirely wrong.

It must be understood that though I was within an arm's easy reach of these people, I stood in the shadows with the cap pulled low, it was a dark night, and they gave me no more attention than they would have given the chauffeur himself; and I had security in the knowledge that at the first exclamation or sign of suspicion from any one of them, I would have two guns out.

However, I did not want to shoot. I wanted a confession. It was this that definitely decided me against trying to round them up in a bunch, for after the first shock of surprize they would all regain composure and either lie readily or be sullenly silent. I knew that, if I could do it, the best way would be to catch them one at a time.

One of the men said to me—"To the Marshal Hotel," and I answered with a throaty "Yes, sir," and turning away, got in, preferring to leave him to close the door rather than risk taking that one step closer.

No one appeared to notice that the small speedometer light was not burning, so I sat in darkness.

"And drive carefully!" said Mrs. Forgues.

"Yes, 'm," I answered, as best I could imitating Hammond's voice, at the same time starting up the motor.

We moved off.

I drove two blocks, turned the corner, went two blocks, turned again, and when I was within less than a block of the rear of the Forgues house, which was on the corner, I stopped the car, turned on the dome light, jumped out, opened the door, and had a gun leveled at her pretty head before the woman inside knew what to think.

"Have you gone crazy!" she said, with a kind of composed hauteur that very well concealed her alarm, if indeed she then felt any.

I thrust myself well inside the door so that the light fell on me; and then I waited, staring at her. She had no way of knowing that, as far as I was concerned, she was on trial for her life. She regarded me with a poised indignation as if indeed I was nothing but a chauffeur who had gone out of his head; and I had the rather uneasy feeling that after all I would perhaps have to apologize to this woman. Then in silence I removed the chauffeur's cap, thus giving her a better view of my face.

After a moment of tense staring, fear started into her eyes; they widened; she opened her mouth as if to scream, but all the sound that came from her was the whispered word—

"Richmond!"

"So," I said, "though I have never seen you before, and though I do not now wear a dark suit or carry a cane, you recognize me. You, indeed, could pick me out of any number of prisoners as the man who visited the Guerini house—though I was never near it! Out you come!"

She was a beautiful woman, dark enough easily to play the rôle of an Italian; but at this moment, and for some hours, she was not so very beautiful. She looked wildly to the right and to the left, but all that could be seen was foggy blackness.

"I—I don't understand," she gasped, trying what an expression of beauty in distress might do with me; and at the same time she leaned forward slightly, getting her face nearer my own, but I saw what she was trying to do with her right hand. It was moving toward the pocket of her coat.

Quick as a snake strikes I struck her wrist with the muzzle of the gun, then jerked the gun back, and moved back slightly myself so that she could not easily grab me.

She cried out, hurt, and began rubbing her wrist, and said:

"Oh, oh you are cruel! I don't know anything about you! I am afraid— Oh, I don't know you!"

"You spoke my name."

"You were once pointed out to me, and the man who came to the house—he looked just like you!"

Brutally I said to her:

"You are a bunch of brainless crooks. The police are not fools. Don't you suppose they knew you were too young and well painted to be the housekeeper for unmarried men without being up to some deviltry? And to plant a gun with my fingerprints on it—that was stupid. They know how that gun got there. Jim Conners is dead. I myself climbed up the rope ladder. Gyles has confessed. And here you, the housekeeper and chief witness, are caught at the home of Renaud's daughter who has sworn to have me framed and hanged. The game's up. Out you come, with hands up—and you can yell if you want!"

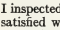
She came from the limousine. She was frightened, but not too frightened to put some tears in her eyes and a pleading tenderness in her voice as she begged:

"Please don't hurt me!" saying—"Oh you can't believe that I would have remained silent and let you be punished!" Then asking: "Where am I? What are you going to do to me?".

I went into the pocket of her coat and tossed away the small automatic that I found there; then rudely fastening my left hand in her hair, I pushed, or at least guided rather than led, her to the garage at the rear of the Forgues house. At the foot of the stairs I paused and listened to make sure that no one had found the chauffeur.

In the room overhead I found that he had floundered out of bed and had been writhing about in a desperate effort to get free. But he could not get free.

Very calmly and quickly I tied the woman into a chair, hands and feet; after which I inspected the chauffeur's knots, and being satisfied with them, let him lie as he was. He might catch cold in that state of undress, but I doubted it, for excitement would keep him warm.



WITHOUT making a threat, or the least explanation, I moved the table before her and took up a piece of string; I tied one end of the string to the trigger of the cocked automatic, with the muzzle near and pointed straight at her; then I fastened a flashlight for a weight about six inches from the other end of the string, and this end I then attached to the edge of the table. I lighted one of the chauffeur's Turkish cigarets and fastened it to the string, between the flashlight and the edge of the table.

Obviously, when that cigaret had burned to the string the string would part, the fall of the flashlight would jerk the trigger, and the muzzle was so close to her that a bullet could not miss.

She understood clearly enough the significance of this arrangement, and gasped—

"Oh you are murdering me! Oh!"

"No," I assured her, "not at all. I am simply giving you the privilege of committing suicide. If you talk fast enough to tell me all about this Guerini affair before that string burns in two, I shall put out the cigaret. If you do not care to talk—" I shrugged a shoulder.

Then I adjusted a newspaper across the table in such a way as to conceal the cigaret and how fast it was burning. But she could see only the smoke in filmy blue wisps wavering out from under the newspaper.

Her eyes took on a fixed stare, her cheeks lost color, her lips quivered; her whole body then seemed to have the ague. She was a slim, pretty, dark, cat-like creature.

"Put it out! I'll tell you! Put it out! My ——, put it out! You're murdering me, I tell you!"

"You are wasting your time. I shall not touch that cigaret until you have told all I want to know. So if you care to say anything at all, talk fast! You can yell if you wish, but if I have to go to that door to meet anybody that your yelling brings here, that cigaret burns on."

The fact that I myself stood near her and could not myself see how much of the cigaret was burned is what, I think, made her lose her courage. Had I been watching the cigaret she must have believed that I would pinch out the fire before it reached the string. But I could not see it any more than she could, and was not nearer. I had once seen a man win a bet that a cigaret, with one end tied to a string, would burn of itself for a full five minutes; and five minutes is a long time when one is on a strain, and a great deal can be said in two or three minutes.

"Oh, I'll tell you! Everything! Put it out! Don't kill me! My ——, please! Put it out! Oh I don't want to die—please—oh please!"

I watched her. My arms were crossed; and if she could read any sign on my face, her perception was keener than that of hard gamblers who had stared searchingly into my eyes across a table loaded with money, all of which was to be theirs if they could detect whether or not I was bluffing.

That chauffeur was squirming about as if he himself were in line of fire and thought himself about to die; he gurgled and made disagreeable sounds in a gallant effort to curse me. He was a decent sort of fellow, and she was a woman, young, very pretty, and utterly helpless—though her face was now almost hideous with the fear that she felt. Her eyes were staringly distorted, and the wildness of her look indicated that she believed I would be merciless. She well knew that I had reason to be merciless.

I said as coolly as I have ever said anything in my life:

"It burns until you have spoken; not only spoken, but told all. If you do not care to speak—so be it. It is you who make the choice."

She stared at the thin film of smoke that drifted idly into view from behind the newspaper and vanished upward; how much was burned, or how long it would burn, she had no possible way of knowing; but she knew that it did burn.

Her words came with a confessional babble. She threw out the truth, hurriedly, without reservation, raising her voice higher and higher until with almost hysterical shrillness she cried:

"——that is all, and true—I swear it! Now save me! Save me! You promised! Oh my ——, you're going to kill me! Oh, oh, oh!"

I stood motionless, looking at her, watching, waiting. I believed what she had said, though it did not wholly fit with what I had thought. It had been appallingly frank. She had not dared weigh her words and shape them evasively, for that would have taken time; and any instant she believed that she might die. She had spoken hurriedly, admitting that the Guerini housekeeper had been lured away so that she, by pretending to be an Italian, with fine letters, might get into the house. It was so well guarded that the crooks had been doubtful of trying to force an entrance. It was not until after she had got the position and found young Guerini in love with her—and, of course, I knew she had deliberately inflamed him—that it was decided to arrange the crime so as to fasten the blame on me.

Young Guerini was not the son but the nephew; and his uncle was a fierce old man who kept him practically a prisoner. She had shown young Guerini how the blame could be fastened on me! The fool had stabbed his uncle in the back, then they had collected all the jewels from their various hiding places. Then two other people had been let into the house, and Young Guerini was himself stabbed in the back and the bodies of both dead men had been shot with my automatic.

Young Guerini had actually written that letter to me which I had taken from the fingers of the gunman Jim; the young fool had thought he was building up the case against me for the murder of his uncle. Young Guerini was going to testify that he had left me and his uncle alone in the library.

She had interrupted her confession several times to beg me now to remove that gun, but I said:

"Go on! Tell it all!" And she went on.

The confession was, of course, sketchy; much of the detail was left out, but all that was unimportant at present. I had the story; and I had it in the presence of a witness, for the chauffeur now lay quiet and the look in his eyes was just about as if he gazed upon some strange monster.

When the confession had been as complete as even I could expect under the circumstance, she begged frantically, but I remained without moving and looked at her, waiting.

Then the string was burned; the weight fell; the hammer clicked, and that was all.

She had been bluffed into a confession.

Stupid woman, indeed, to have thought that I, under such circumstances, would have run the risk of killing off my most important witness.

She stared at the gun, incredulously and gasped for breath. Then, understanding what had happened, glared at me. I said nothing, but what she mistook for a smile of triumph must have infuriated her. Tears seemed to boil out of her eyes though she did not sob. Her nerves were shattered and she was enraged at having been so easily tricked.

"It's a lie! A lie! All I said was a lie! I lied to save myself! No one will believe you! You can't prove I said it and—"

I took Guerini's letter from my pocket.

"This proves it!" I said, just as if indeed it really proved something. "You forget that Conners was caught planting it in my room. And don't you suppose he, too, confessed? And as for a witness—"

I turned and pointed toward the chauffeur. She had somewhat forgotten his presence, but now looked toward him and understood my gesture. There lay a witness who could confirm my report—even if confirmation were to be needed, as was unlikely, when I had finished with this night's work.

I then went to him, pulled away the gag, helped him into a sitting position, drew a blanket off the bed and threw it about him, not so much because of the chill as because he was not dressed in a way to make him feel at ease if he should happen to think of his state of undress—though at that he was no more undressed than the young men who compete in track teams. They may parade in less than the usual suit of underwear before a crowded grandstand and no one thinks anything that shouldn't be thought, but if one of them undertook to remove his trousers on the campus he would be pitched into a madhouse. There is much about life and its curious ways that I do not understand, whatever the explanations.

I said to the chauffeur:

"Mr. Hammond, you are mixed up with a lot of crooks. And my guess is that the principal reason you were selected as chauffeur is because you have no criminal record. It would have been embarrassing for all these people to have had some policeman take a look at Mrs. Forgues's chauffeur and recall a tell-tale photograph in the rogue's gallery. You have heard what this woman has said. You know from the sound of her voice that it is true. I am Everhard. That explains why I am here, and what I have done.

"I would now like to turn you loose, but you are young, inexperienced and gallant. In ten minutes this female would have your head so turned about that you would forget what you have just heard from her own lips. It will be necessary to leave you two together for a time; and as I can't very well plug your ears, I shall tie her mouth."

"I don't know what to think—what to think!" he said. "——, this is awful. I—I can't believe it! I—I feel crazy—I—I you know, half believe I'm dreaming."

I took up my gun from the table, snapped a shell into it, then replaced in the magazine-clip, the one that I had removed in tricking her into telling what she knew and had done.

"This may help some," I told him, and offered a cigaret. I put it between his lips and held a match.

Then with no gentleness at all, I tied the woman's mouth, for I would as soon have stuck a short candle in a keg of powder as to have left her free to talk with him.

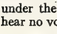
I, it seemed, had put in most of the night tying people up and gagging them; but that is an easy thing to do, and when one plays a lone-handed game there is little else that one can do.

I spread out the Guerini letter on the table before her, where she could look at it, read it over and over if she wished. This was for what people who know about such things called the "psychological effect." Jim Conners had not confessed, but I wanted her to think so, and to keep on thinking so until after I had her in the hands of the police. I thought the presence of this Guerini letter, which was never intended to fall into my hands, might help her to understand how completely the frame-up against me had collapsed.

I looked at my watch. It was then about four o'clock. The night was going fast, but I felt that I had made pretty good use of the time.

I went downstairs and took particular notice of the rear entrance to the house, even risking a wink or two of the flash light. I saw that lights were still burning in both the lower and upper story, which meant that these people had not felt like retiring.

They were, I supposed, either waiting for news about what had happened at Gyles's apartment or else talking of what they had learned. I went along the side of the house under the windows and listened but could hear no voices.



THEN I did what I consider was the only really rash and desperate thing that I had so far done that night; for in all else I had, so to speak, taken advantage of the other fellow's move. I had merely adapted myself to circumstances as I found them, and the truth is that I had had very little choice in the matter. I had, for instance, climbed the ladder into Gyles's apartment because there was no other way out; I had come to Mrs. Forgues's address because there was no place else that I could go unless I wanted to spend the rest of my days dodging the police; I had found a chauffeur waiting to take out the limousine on a dark foggy night that helped me impersonate him, and had kidnapped the seductive Louise only because she of her own free will got into the car.

And though this may appear to have been quite simple, and was wholly undramatic, I, who know how to appraise such incidents at their full value, knew that in returning to the garage and in ringing the telephone, I took about the biggest chance of that exciting night for it was the only incident of that night in which I trusted almost entirely to luck, yet even this was not quite a blind hazard. I knew that Fletcher was in a way the *major domo* of that establishment; therefore I ran practically no risk in being sure that it was his voice when a man answered; and so, counting on the familiarity of my attitude and a pretense of excitement to disguise my voice sufficiently to keep him from being suspicious, I said:

"Mr. Fletcher, this is Bill. An' say, I've got something —— funny to tell you. Come up here quick! When I took her home, a fellow come up to me an' tried to ask questions. Said he was that Everhard—and—but you come up an' I'll tell you!"

I heard the fellow swear in astonishment. If that bit of information wouldn't excite him I did not know what to say that would, and I was confident that he would come rushing out of the house. So I hung up the receiver, in two jumps I was down the garage stairs. I ran to the rear of the house, stood to one side and waited there not more than ten seconds when the door opened. One glance showed me that the fellow was leaving the house alone—was not bringing any one along with him to talk to the chauffeur. I had no time and was not in a mood to parley with him, as I wanted to reach Mrs. Forgues as soon as possible; so I did what I very seldom do, though I was to do it again that night—I hit him over the head. The instant that I struck I thrust out my foot to keep the door from closing. I did not want to have to fumble with Fletcher's key ring to gain admittance, and for all I knew he may have had no key but would have had to ring the bell to get back in the house.

I flashed the light I had brought with me upon him. Whether he was alive or dead did not concern me, except that in case he recovered consciousness I did not want him to get away. This was to be as thorough a clean-up as I could make it. With his own handkerchiefs I tied his wrists behind him, and his ankles.

Then quickly, but with caution, I pushed open the door, entered, closed it behind me; and to my sensitive ears the faint *click* of the closing door seemed unnecessarily loud.

Thus, at last and without having given the least warning to those within, I had entered the house of Mrs. Forgues — who had so skillfully planned to have me hanged. The wanton audacity of that plot, its almost inconceivable ingenuity, was so great that had I even escaped the gallows, I could never, by any other course than that I had adopted, have entirely cleared myself of suspicion.

XV

THERE would be, of course, servants in this house; few or many, I had no way of knowing, and of what character? Having discovered that the chauffeur was a fellow who had none of the instincts or earmarks of a crook, I could readily understand why these people had selected a man of his type for his work. But would the same reasons apply to the servants who were kept out of sight in the house? I did not know; but I guessed that the so-called Mrs. Forgues would not care to be surrounded by lesser crooks, menials, who knew the secret of the house and might, if angered or pinched or cross-examined, whimper to the police.

This Fletcher was probably the one trusted agent who stood between Mrs. Forgues and the lesser crooks whose services she rewarded and whose blunders she punished. It was Mrs. Forgues that I wanted to find; and I know that if alarmed she would cut and run, scoot, vanish—for the more clever the crook, the quicker he is to know when it is time to disappear.

So like a burglar who has entered a lighted house, I had to prowl about; and something—perhaps my own anxiety—made me feel that for some reason I did not have much time.

I went through the kitchen, through the pantry, pushed open a swinging door and looked across an unlighted room to the lighted doorway beyond. I stood still, listening. There was no sound. I moved across, peered through, and saw no one. A silver cocktail shaker, glasses that had been used, and a few bottles were on a table. There was no one about, and I heard neither voices nor any other sound. I did not actually think so, but I was afraid that they had already gone, either had taken fright or had gone out about some business.

A telephone stood on its cabinet in which it was ordinarily concealed from view. I wished that I knew how to make the thing ring so that some one would be brought into the room; but I did not know how to make it ring, and I did not care to try to talk to central. But the next best thing was to remove the receiver and place it down.

In less than half a minute I heard the inquiring buzz of central, and simultaneously a ringing of a telephone bell somewhere within the house; the sound was faint, thin, almost lost in the depth of the big house. The buzzing stopped. I heard the squeak of voices and picked up the receiver to listen. The voice I recognized as that of Mrs. Forgues, answering from the extension telephone in her room upstairs. I heard her say:

"Receiver's down? I don't know why it should be. All right"—then between the time she took the receiver from her ear and clashed it as if angered on the hook, I heard her say: "Tom, go down and—"

So just as well as if I had been where I could watch, I knew that she had turned to the man with her and told him to go down and see about the telephone.

This man, if my guess was right, would be Tom Jordan, man-about-town, who dealt in dope, and for whom Clyde Gyles had been an agent.

I crossed to the doorway and stood out of sight near the hall entrance where the stairs came down; and before I was well in place I heard his feet on the stairs. He passed within two feet of me, stopped suddenly as if sensing something wrong, looked at the telephone, took a slow step backward, put a hand to his hip. He was, sensitively, alarmed. He said quietly—

"Jerry? Jerry?" then with head turned backward across his shoulder saw me, and my upraised gun fell on his head.

I caught him as he was sinking and let him go without a thump to the floor. I had no time to pause to tie him, and no fear at all that he would soon recover consciousness.

I turned at once and walked up the stairs, into the hall overhead, along the lighted hall to where light came through a half open door; and here I stopped, or rather paused, then entered.

It was a large room, much larger than the usual large room, and had much the extravagantly luxurious air that one associates with a vain woman who has spent lots of money on herself. The stink of that sort of incense that is always unpleasant to me filled the room, because acrid smoke of burning punk wavered up through the eyes and nose and mouth of a small black dragon that had a taboret all to itself. The room was bizarre with vivid blues and greens, and I got a confused impression of silks and frothy lace, of queer nick-nacks—bric-à-brac, I believe the stuff is called. It seemed to me that artificiality had been drawn to a fine wire-edge, and in a way that was hardly in keeping with the character of that hard voiced, murderous woman.

A woman sat in that sort of half chair, half couch, that is called a *chaise-longue* which was covered with tapestry that had a design of large green parrots with red beaks. Her back was toward the door. She wore a gossamer thing of yellow silk and lace, and, lost in thought, broodingly rested her chin on a palm.

Had that confounded Louise told me something in her confession there in the garage that I was to learn before many minutes passed, I would have been saved a bit of trouble with this Mrs. Forgues, so-called; but Louise had either forgotten, more likely had withheld, the most important fact about this murderous creature.

I shall describe what happened, and as nearly as I can just the way it happened.

Having entered the room, I said nothing but stood still. There is more menace in silence than in the noisiest threat, and I wanted that she should discover me rather than that I should announce myself.

She lifted a long cigaret holder to her mouth, then without looking about, said:

"Shut that door, Tom. I feel chilly."

I did not wonder at that for she did not have on many clothes, none of much warmth.

I closed the door by reaching out behind me and grasping the knob. Then I again stood still, waiting. Her hair was tawny, bobbed, dyed. Her father's head had been black.

"—— the fool police!" she said. "But the fingerprints on that gun will hang him. And Louise's story—he can't beat that. But I wish we would hear something. ——, everything seems to go wrong. What was wrong with that telephone?"

I MADE no answer. She glanced behind her, her eyes just across her shoulder and instantly she became like one turned to stone. For the merest fraction of a second she must have thought that the chauffeur had entered, then knew that it was not so.

Her nose was thin and long, her mouth thin-lipped and small, cheeks high and thin. She looked like Renaud. A fringe of tawny hair, evenly cut, hung half down her forehead, giving the impression that her forehead was very low. Her eyes were deep-set and black, as Renaud's had been; and there was much the sort of lidless glitter in them that a snake's eyes have. There was nothing in her face that partook of womanly beauty; yet the dyed hair, the silken lacy stuffs, the heavy color on her cheeks, did give her that bizarre aspect that often seduces bored men who have tired of simple charms.

With a jerk of her whole body she turned farther about in her seat and then, motionlessly, glared at me. Still a third time, with a kind of convulsive jerk, she twisted about, and then half-leaning over the back of the *chaise-longue*, became again motionless. She dropped her glance toward the floor, blinking rapidly, and with jerk of head lifted her eyes again toward me; but I did not vanish as she seemed almost to expect. I was more than a specter.

"Who the —— are you?" she snapped in that strained, irritated voice that now in angered petulance seemed even less feminine than when I had heard it over the telephone.

I, who had expected that she would be cool, resourceful, daring, had greatly underestimated her coolness. I don't think one can hardly imagine a more startling situation in which a woman may find herself; yet her tone, her eyes, her whole manner, was so convincing that if some good common sense had not arisen to correct the impression, I would have believed that she really did not know me by sight.

Of course she knew me; and knowing that she did, I immediately increased my respect for her ability to be deceptive and dangerous. It was not merely by right of inheritance but by the greater right of ability that she had taken much the same place in crookdom as had been held by her father.

But as I have said, her manner was so convincing that for a moment I was careless enough to think that perhaps she had never taken the trouble to catch sight of me; and I told her—

"Richmond!"

"Who?"

"Everhard."

Even that did not make her betray the slightest sign of excitement. She said—

"Oh yes. There was something in the papers about you. Well, what are you doing here? My jewelry is over there in that box. If that's what you want, take it and get out!"

"Very good," I said approvingly. "But useless. Tonight I talked with you over the telephone from Gyles's apartment, and—"

"With me? You 're crazy. I don't know what you are talking about!"

"And"—I indicated the chauffeur's suit which I wore—"an hour or two ago, I drove your car with your Louise—"

"Yes," she nodded quickly. "After you were gone, I said that driver acted queer tonight. Ah, I see! You have killed Louise, you —— murderer! She was the one important witness against you!"

"No. I have put her carefully away. She is the one important witness against *you!*"

Of all the people I have ever known, this woman, more than any other, had the gift of a convincing naturalness—yet she was entirely artificial and deceptive. The most deceptive person I ever met. Her voice was unpleasant, the tone disagreeable, but the intonations were perfect in conveying precisely what an innocent and unemotional woman would have felt, and she acted magnificently in that she did not appear to act at all.

I tell you but for the fact that I knew absolutely that she was of Renaud's breed, I would have doubted that I had come upon the right person.

"Witness? Against me?" she asked with an accent of cool mystification. "Of what are you talking? The papers say you are a madman, and you must be!"

"It would be a waste of words to tell you what is already so well known. The woman Louise has confessed to murder and robbery. So—"

"Louise? Murder? Robbery? You have lied! She is my dead brother's widow —but was too proud to accept help from me. And you accuse her of murder!"

"I accuse you. You are waiting for news from Gyles's apartment. I bring it. To-night in my rooms, I shot Conners and took the letter you had given him to plant there. I climbed the ladder into Gyles's apartment. I asked questions and they were answered. You telephoned—and I had the call traced to the hotel where you were, and learned that you were Mrs. Forgues. When you later telephoned this house, I learned its address. I came. Your chauffeur is bound and stripped. Your Louise has confessed and is a prisoner. Your Fletcher is tied up. Your friend Tom Jordan is below with a broken head, unconscious, perhaps dead. The game is up. You have already as much as confessed when thinking I was some one else; you said, '—— the fool police', and that the fingerprints and Louise's story would get me hanged. There are the facts. Lie out of them, if you can."

"Lie? There's nothing to lie about. I read the papers. I talked with Louise—naturally I have been thinking of the case. I called the police fools for letting you get away from them. And if the fingerprints on that gun, and what Louise knows of your visits isn't enough evidence—what in the world would be? How you got my address by mistake, I don't know. But I do know this"—she stood up, facing me, but there was much distance between us, and I meant that it should remain—

"Louise has periods when her mind is not quite right. She knows it, and is very sensitive about it, but tries to keep other people from learning it. She has been excited and frightened by that terrible murder. If she made any sort of confession, you threatened her in some way, terrified her, and the poor girl simply went out of her head and said anything she thought you wanted to hear!"

"Not so good!" I said, shaking my head slightly, but really thinking that she had made a most skillful evasion.

Had she carried such a story into the court-room it could have been knocked to flinders, but she intended never to enter a court-room. Her purpose was to throw me off guard for the merest moment. I had no idea what she might hope to do in that moment, but was determined not to be off guard. Yet with that astounding plausibility of hers, and the cool indignation, she almost succeeded by saying:

"I wonder about my maid? I've been suspicious of that girl for some time. She had used my name! Gyles? Gyles? I heard her just the other day use that name over the telephone. And, you see, Fletcher, my butler, is her uncle. You know, I've rather sensed that they have been up to something strange and not quite right."

"This maid of yours, where is she?"

"She was out late this evening. Her day off. But now in bed. Shall I call her?"

She started as if for a button that would awaken and summons the maid.

"Stay where you are!" I told her and drew a gun.

She eyed the gun for a moment without any indication of interest, much less uneasiness.

I admit that I was not baffled exactly, but just a little doubtful. In this most complicated of complicated frame-ups, it was possible—not likely, but possible—that this Mrs. Forgues had somehow left a way open for her own escape, even though every one else should have been caught! I had really expected that my mere presence would break her down, cause her to lose self-control, and that at best she would tell a tangled story and could be safely turned over to the police. The very excellence of her acting and extemporaneous lying made me more guarded. If I did give her over to the police, she might make them think that I was crazy. The woman Louise would say that she had confessed wildly to whatever she thought I wanted to hear. Perhaps the chauffeur, not proving as honest as I hoped, might be helped with some money to join Louise in case she denied that she had confessed anything.

A woman with such a brain as the daughter had inherited from Renaud, could wiggle and squirm out of much of the evidence that I might bring against her. It is one thing to know that crooks are guilty, another to prove it. Though I did prove that the murderers of the Guerinis had framed a case against me, that would not necessarily establish that this woman was associated with Jim Conners, Gyles, or had instigated the murder.

I won't admit that I was afraid of her, but she made me feel so doubtful that I, reluctantly, was thinking perhaps the best thing I could do was to tie her up, call the police, and make sure that they at once question the chauffeur and Louise; and in that way get somewhat at the truth.

It may seem odd, but I actually dreaded trying to tie that woman. I knew just as well as a man can know what has not yet happened that she would never let me tie her up without a fight; and if I banged her over the head or shot her, the police might take any sort of explanation with a large amount of skepticism.

So we stood, I some twenty feet from her with a gun in my hand; she near the *chaise-longue*. There were no lights near that she could turn out, no doorway at hand through which she could duck; it seemed to me that there was nothing she could do.

THEN suddenly, to my great relief, she seemed to break, as if the strain was too much. She threw up her hands, said—

"My —— I can stand this no longer!" She pulled at her hair, and as if about to fall, staggered.

But lest she stagger too close to a doorway, I said:

"Careful there! Stay where you are!"

Instantly she faced me and caught up my words:

"Stay where I am! No! I'll put myself where you can't touch me! Guilty—yes, I'm guilty! I swore to kill you! Swore to have you hanged for a crime you did not do, to make you pay for the one you did when you killed my father. I've played the game and lost! And here I die!"

I saw her with trembling haste pull at a gold chain about her neck, and her fingers closed on a small gold phial. She stared at me and shrank back as she seemed to fumble with the lid; and though I started to rush forward and try to snatch away the poison bottle, I checked myself. I have seen more than even two or three women threaten to kill themselves, and I have been made skeptical because all of them appeared to be trying to get some man to restrain them. Not one had ever gone through with the threat; and I said to her now—

"All right. Suit yourself!"

It seemed to me that she hesitated as if surprized, a little disappointed; but her pause, if there was really a pause, passed with dramatic suddenness. Throwing back her head she raised the gold phial to her mouth. I saw her swallow twice, and as if choking she said—

"Oh, oh, oh!" and grasping her throat with one hand as if to ease the pain, threw out the other in a frantic blind gesture and the phial dropped to the length of its chain against her breast.

Her breathing became like the breath of one who struggles desperately and is being choked. Her low cries were inarticulate. With one hand then the other, she grasped her throat, beat at her breast, clutched and tore the loose silk, and writhed blindly with eyes fixed unseeingly in a wild stare. She staggered, turned as if in a spasm of pain too great to be longer endured, and fell backwards, her back across the headpiece of the *chaise-longue*. Her voice died away in low gasps, as if she had been, at last, suffocated. One arm hung loose, the other, with awkward twist of wrist, lay on her breast.

"This is the end," I said aloud, and with feeling. I had, actually, some respect for one who had played her game, even a crime game, so audaciously.

And as for her suicide, it was a confession. Now there would be no one to deny or to advise the pretty Louise, and the truth would be known and believed.

I walked slowly across the large room and stood near her, looking down. She appeared hideous with her head thrown back, hair tangled, her mouth open, and the eyes half open in the vacant stare that is common among the dead; especially among those who die violently.

Though I had let her go as far as she liked about dying, and made no restraining gesture, it did not seem right to leave her dead body in that grotesque attitude; and I bent over to lift her and place the body on the couch.

AS IF my touch was miraculous, she became alive; not merely alive, but filled with all the fury of one whose difficult ruse has at last drawn the victim within reach. She struck upwards, with a dagger, razor-sharp, and the whole six inches of steel would have gone inside of me had not the point struck one of the buttons of the chauffeur's coat. Instantly she struck again, and the slash went through the cloth and deep into my arm, and she tried to knife me again.

The next five minutes—I don't think they were more if so many—were about as lively as any through which I have ever lived. I had fastened on her wrist, her right wrist with my left hand, and wrenched her arm out to one side. My right arm was injured. I felt no pain, and was hardly conscious of weakness. I drew a gun from my hip, and as it cleared the holster she gave a quick kick that sent the gun flying from my fingers, and half way across the room.

I had already had a fight with one woman that night, which is perhaps why I had dreaded trying to tie up this one who, I knew, would make trouble if I got close enough. I had got close enough, and here was trouble.

Not a word was spoken between us. She was strong, but my hand held her wrist, and with the other hand I fumbled somewhat in reaching for the second gun, the one in the shoulder holster which was not slung to be reached by my right hand. She saw instantly what I was after and caught my wrist.

So there we were, each armed, yet at something of a deadlock. I was taller, heavier, but not stronger; at least not while she seemed possessed with fury and desperation. All my effort and attention and strength was given to holding her wrist and keeping that knife away from me; and I could not, while we stood close together, free my own wrist. I could probably have stepped back and twisted free, but to do that I would probably have let her also twist free; and at close quarters a knife is a bad thing to meet.

I have called it a deadlock, but we were not motionless at all; and though mine was the greater weight, so that I could pull her about, there was no place that I wanted to pull her, except in just the opposite direction to that which she seemed to be trying to drag me. And I had to keep a sharp lookout. She was not still a minute; and unlike the usual woman, there was nothing blindly frantic about her struggling. Twice she nearly tripped me, once by throwing out her foot behind my heel and pushing with all her weight; and again by causing me to back and stumble against a heavy footstool.

In trying to keep her from pulling me about the room, because I was suspicious of what she might be up to, I pulled at her, and hardly noticed before I was aware of having backed against the wall.

Whether she had outguessed me, and got me to back to that particular spot—near a door leading into a dressing room—or whether she merely took advantage of what seemed an opportunity, I don't know; anyhow, with a push she set me firmly back against the wall, then, with the nimble quickness of a toe dancer, she kicked out, lifting her foot and striking the light switch. Instantly the room was in darkness. Though there were light switches beside all the doors, it happened that they were either all controlled by the same wires, or that only the lights were on which this particular switch controlled. These, however, were not the push button sort of switches, but the newer type which resembles a little knob-like lever. Her kick had snapped off the knob.

I knew very well without having to think twice why she considered that an important advantage for herself—and so did I. The knife, usually more deadly at close quarters than a gun, become infinitely more so in the dark; though to my mind, and I think in every one else's mind, a gun in the hands of some one who can shoot straight renders a knife simply worthless if it is held by one who is more than an arm's length off. That is one reason why I use guns and make people keep their distance, or try to make make them keep at a safe distance.

With the room in darkness, we stood for a time quietly. She had perhaps succeeded in doing what she had wanted to do, but had struggled as if she had not wanted to be pulled in that direction; and she seemed really short of breath and willing to rest. So was I. I wanted to break away, but did not know how. The moment my hands were off her she might, in the dark, bolt from the room and vanish. On the other hand she might cut me up pretty severely. I preferred to be cut up rather than that she get away, but I didn't want to be cut up. I did not feel the least pain in my right arm, seemed in fact slightly numb, and was weak.

She was breathing hard but evenly; not panting. The very manner of her breathing showed self-control, and though I knew that in standing quiet that she was resting up for some further deviltry, I let her rest and looked a bit prayerfully toward the windows where the murky dimness of a foggy dawn was beginning to filter through the panes, but as yet gave hardly any light into the room. It was light that I wanted, lots of light.

So we stood silently. Then I heard a sound, not one but a succession of stealthy sounds that seemed to be outside the room. This woman who had not said a word began suddenly to curse me; and nobody, for all that I have told of her cunning, would be likely to guess what she said and how she said it.

"Can't anybody ever get the best of you, you ——! Oh —— you, you are too strong! Oh I am helpless! Oh do what you like! You are too strong!"

That was the way she talked, and rapidly, loudly; her voice seemed to break with a kind of sobbing.

I never have to learn the same lesson twice; and there was now more likelihood that I would suspect her of cunning when there was no reason than that I would be thrown off guard, whatever her attitude of surrender—particularly when it was not accompanied by any relaxation of muscles. I knew this time what she was doing. She too had heard the furtive sounds, very like the footsteps of stealthy persons. Her friends, of course. She was trying to distract my attention from them, and perhaps also to let them know something of her situation here in this room.

I write all this with an air of deliberation and leisureliness; but I can assure you that at the moment there was no time for deliberation. I heard the click of the door being opened; a man's voice, huskily anxious, called—

"Peggy?" and the word had not completely crossed his lips before she was screaming:

"Quick—help me! Here! The lights! I've got him!"

ON THE instant it was just about as if twenty devils had decided to make their presence known, though most of that racket was made by one voice, a woman's, the shrill mouth of Jim Conners' girl whom I had left locked in a closet of the Gyles apartment.

The man who had been sent to find out what was wrong at the Gyles apartment had nosed about, and not finding the police there, had jimmied the kitchen door, entered, found Gyles dead, the girl in the closet, and both of them had left the same way that I had departed, that is, down the rope ladder. He had put the girl into his car, intending to hurry with her to Mrs. Forgues's house; but, as it chanced to be Friday the thirteenth, which is unlucky for those who believe in that sort of thing, they had run out of gasoline. There was no station near, no cars came along, so they had set out to walk, and had not arrived until almost morning.

They had found near the front steps that fellow Fletcher whom I had cracked over the head and left at the back of the house. Recovering consciousness, and being unable to loosen his hands or ankles, he had squirmed and rolled himself almost to the front door. This crook who had brought the girl was a fellow known as the "Sheik" because of a certain dapper appearance, and he had loosened Jerry. Together they had hurried into the house, and there found Tom Jordan. At first they thought him dead, but detecting a trace of life, they dosed him well with whisky, inside and out, and presently he sat up and told what he knew. When the others were about to rush pell-mell up the stairs, Fletcher told them to go noiselessly, so as not to alarm me; otherwise I might jump from a window and make my getaway.

And so they had broken into the room where I struggled with their leader; and just as quickly as the need for silence had passed, that crook girl of Jim Conners', who seemed to feel that she had special cause for wishing me bad luck, began to yell like a fury, like two furies. The men too shouted and cursed. The room was dark. In their excitement they fumbled a few seconds for the switch. Mrs. Forgues was also screaming. They made a most unpleasant and disturbing noise.

It is not to be thought for a moment that

I stood still and waited to see what was going to happen. As I have often admitted, I know nothing of boxing or wrestling. I do not like to have people touch me, and struggling fights are something that I avoid as if they were traps. But the danger in which I now found myself caused me to do something which, had I thought of it before I would have done before; but I can hardly say that I thought of it at all. I was simply cornered and, therefore, as nearly desperate as I ever was; and with hardly a thought of what I was doing, I lunged forward and drove a bent knee into the so-called Mrs. Forgues' stomach; and as she went down, I broke away.

At just about that instant the lights were switched on, and in spite of having had to reach for my gun, I shot. The man-about-town, Tom Jordan, being the nearest, dropped forward with a sliding sprawl. His cocked gun went off from the convulsive pressure of his finger as he died. Fletcher and the Sheik shot rapidly. They were too excited. I dropped the Sheik but did not put the bullet just where I wanted, so that he staggered back toward the doorway, meaning to get outside. And just as I pulled down on Fletcher the girl switched off the lights. I wasn't sure whether or not I had hit Fletcher. I shot again, two or three times, into the darkness. Everybody was yelling. It seemed to me that the whole city was yelling. The crook girl was screaming, and a moment later guns seemed to break out all over the house. The Sheik had crawled into the hall and there went on shooting. But not at me.

I had a puzzled second or two in trying to understand the meaning of the sudden shout of many loud voices, the heavy stamp of running feet, the thud of blows, and *bang-bang-bang* of heavy guns. But the police had come. A flurry of gun fire was sweeping the hall where the wounded Sheik and Fletcher were making their last stand. It was the crooks who were cornered, and like the thorough crooks that they were, they shot it out to the last flicker of life with the police. But the crook girl broke through a window that wouldn't open readily and, badly scratched and cut, jumped. But the house was surrounded. It had been surrounded for some minutes before the shooting started up which caused the police to break in as they had done. Nearly all the reserves had been hurried to Mrs. Forgues.

While I was getting it through my head that the police, and not more crooks, had come, a shadow-like form that, in the vaguest of gray foggy lights, seemed to leap straight off the floor, jumped at me. Quicker than the snap of thumb and finger, I shot; then again, and again—and my gun was empty. It seemed indeed as if I had shot at a phantom. I did not miss. I could not have missed, but I was slashed again and again and again. I caught at the arm, I struck with my own gun, then I cast the gun aside and caught at the body and slammed it against the wall, and held it there with all my weight and strength—and there I was when the police flashlights came through the door; I, like a fellow suddenly gone mad, holding a dead body against the wall as if I was afraid of it.

I am not superstitious; but I almost do believe that this so-called Mrs. Forgues was so intent and full of murder that she knifed me after she was dead. That would seem to account somewhat for the weakness of the slashes, which however were bad enough to have the surgeon say that I looked, after he got through, something like a piece of embroidery. The doctor who afterward examined the body of the supposed Mrs. Forgues declared that two of three bullet holes were sufficient to cause instant death. But I knew that they hadn't. The gold phial on the gold chain, which I had thought contained poison did really contain poison, but of the form known as cocaine. There was much of the powder spilled on the floor which seemed to indicate that she had taken a large dose just before I was attacked; but the doctor said that not enough time had elapsed for the drug to have had an effect.

Anyhow, in came the police; and though I expected some menace and even abuse from them, at least at first, I was glad to see that there were so many.

The Sheik, when he had released the crook-girl from the closet in Gyles's apartment had immediately grabbed the telephone and asked for Mrs. Forgues's number, meaning to get in touch at once with Fletcher. The crook-girl, seeing what he was about, had yelled at him to put it down, saying—

"Everhard's got Central listening in!"

Central was listening in. The chief operator called the police station and reported what had been going on at Gyles's apartment. She even got in touch with

Detective Sergeant Heard himself. The police then hurried to Gyles's apartment, looked about, got every available man on the force, and hurried out to Mrs. Forgues's house, the address of which the chief operator had supplied.

They left their automobiles more than a block away, closed in through the fog, and surrounded the house. They had got there just about the time that the Sheik and crook-girl had turned Jerry loose and entered the house. Officers, through the window, had seen them inside, but they had held off until sure that there was a cordon all about the house. Since they knew the crooks could not escape they had been in no hurry to break in, at least not until after the shooting started.

And there I was, a disreputable looking object, with my face scratched, in a chauffeur's clothes, and the clothes slashed and blood running all over me. Flashlights played over me, then the switch was found and turned on.

The police, as they entered, seemed to become oddly silent and eyed me strangely. Then Detective Sergeants Heard and Jones pushed through the doorway, and men stepped back making room. Both glowered at me in a mystified, staring sort of way, and even seemed a little embarrassed.

Said Jones, growling—

"You're a lucky——!"

Said Heard—

"I'd a-bet my life that the next time I saw you I was goin' 'o shoot you, but here—" He started to put out his hand, then said abruptly to the men near-by, "Take that —— dead man an' put him over there somewhere!"

He pointed to the body of Mrs. Forgues that now lay on the floor near me.

"Man?" I asked.

"No more woman than you are, that fellow," said Heard.

Jones grunted a hoarse agreement.

"But how can you know that? I didn't."

"I was up there in the garage talking to that dame Louise when the fireworks busted loose up here just now. She said Renaud killed the Guerinis—that Renaud was her lover, but dressed like a woman. Helped his game. Helped his getaway. Old Renaud hisself used to wear skirts at times, and probably trained the kid to it. That dame Louise wilted when she saw me walk in. We'd had a long talk this morning, me and her. I mean yesterday morning. But you got to her in the meantime, and just now when she saw me she started right in to frame herself an alibi—blamed it all on Renaud. And that other fellow, the one you took his clothes away from, he was tryin' to talk too when the gats began to pop. Everhard, I never thought I'd do it, but here's where I take my hat off to you. You certainly cleaned up on this bunch. —— man! Ever since midnight we've all been trying to get hold of you to tell you to come in out of the cold and help us catch these —— crooks. We knew you didn't do it!"

"Since midnight? Knew I didn't do it? Why, I thought at best I'd have a hard time convincing you that those fingerprints of mine didn't prove—"

"Fingerprints be ——!" said Heard.

"——'s fire!" said Jones. "It won't be healthy to say fingerprints to me for a good long while. They may be good evidence under certain circumstances, but I'm off fingerprints till I know whose they are. Them wasn't yours!"

Then they had some difficulty in convincing me that those were not my fingerprints on the gun found in Guerini's library. But as it happened, shortly before midnight a well known author, who wrote mystery stories about Chinatown, had appeared at headquarters; and with him came a large representation from Chinatown; and among them the fat good-natured Ch'lo. The police were glad to see Ch'lo and extended him a hearty rather than a cordial greeting.

But the well known author said he had talked this case over with Ch'lo and he had a hunch. He said he had a hunch that those fingerprints were Ch'lo's, not Everhard's; that, though I had handled the guns before I put them in the case after the burglar had left them on the table, Ch'lo remembered wiping them off carefully with an oiled rag before he put the case into its drawer.

The police then took Ch'lo's fingerprints, and one of the men of Identification Bureau announced that the author's hunch was correct. Moreover, the author, having been in Ch'lo's company the night of the murder, supplied a perfect alibi.

Detective Sergeants Heard and Jones had then talked it over between them and, most reluctantly, came to the conclusion that the story I had told them that morning when I escaped arrest was true.

After visiting Gyles's apartment, discovering the rope ladder, the dictaphone, and putting two and two together, they realized as well as anybody that I had been framed by the real murderers of the Guerinis.

So that is about all there is to the story of the famous Guerini murder.

From a belt about the body of Renaud practically all of the Guerini jewels were recovered; and, from clues that were found, much other loot was recovered too. Some of it from safe-deposit boxes.

Incidentally, so thorough was Renaud's impersonation of the part he played, that it was not a wig, but his own hair, dyed and bobbed, which helped to give him the appearance of a woman.

As for the check which I had written out to be paid to whoever should catch the Guerini murderers, that, of course, was returned to me; and I sent it to a person that I had not seen—never did see. But I felt that the chief operator deserved it.

And as for Detective Sergeants Heard and Jones—they are captains now—we became, and still are, the best of friends. I gave freely of interviews to the reporters; and all the newspapers laid emphasis on the excellent work of the two well known sergeants. The Guerini murderers had not been able to hoodwink those experienced old detectives who had willingly let themselves be put into a most humiliating situation by pretending that I had slipped through their fingers and left them bound and gagged—thus they had been able to throw the Renaud gang so completely off guard that it had been easy to round them up.

REVEILLE

by Leonard H. Nason

CAMP SHELBY was in Mississippi, and was garrisoned by troops of the Indiana National Guard, some miscellaneous organizations and some regular artillery. There were also some National Army troops there, but no matter. It was a big camp, a huge camp, and at the end of it was the camp hospital.

The winter of 1917-1918 was bitter cold there, even as far south as it was. How fortunate, then, a man who was admitted to hospital! There were some first-class butchers in charge of some of the wards, but there is always a fly in Army honey, anyway. There were several happy hours of the day, notably meal hour, but the happiest and most enjoyable was reveille. The patients used to wake beforehand to enjoy it to the fullest, as people get up at unseemly hours to see the sun rise.

The windows of the huge ward would be just turned to gray with the cold winter dawn. Jugheads would greet the light with incessant mournful braying, and from the quartermaster corrals clear across the camp to where the jackass batteries of the Fourth Field were quartered, the Rocky Mountain canaries would wail their protest at the cold. Then, one bugle would sound first call, but before it had finished another near at hand would begin, and at once fifty trumpets would answer it, a wild clamor that died away into silence, then was followed by the distant strains of a dozen bands, each playing a different piece for reveille march. "There's a Long, Long Trail," "The Old Gray Mare," "Over There," "Around Her Neck She Wore a Yellow Ribbon," or some other favorite.

The men in the ward could imagine the scene out there in the cold dark, soldiers creeping shivering and cursing from their bunks, trying to light Sibley stoves, drawing on breeches and lacing leggings with fingers stiff with cold, stumbling out of the tents and bruising their feet on the frozen ground as they took their places in ranks to stand and shiver until assembly blew, and then, being dismissed, try to scrape the accumulation of carbon, a by-product of heat produced in tent stoves fed with pine knots, from their faces and hands with icy water.

The poor men in hospital thrust their noses out of the blankets to see how cold it was, and then snuggled down in comfort. They were warm, they were well fed, and they could stay in those soft, warm beds all day long.

The APPRENTICE WAY

by Bill Adams

Author of "Slaves," "The Ensign," etc.

THE two eldest apprentices of the port watch sat in the half-deck at two o'clock of a windy morning smoking their pipes. When one drew his belt a hole tighter the other did likewise and, doing so, swore under his breath.

The two younger boys of the watch came in from the deck. The wind was rising and sprays were beginning to fly. The ship was in the thirties, approaching and close to the blowy forties, and every day was colder than the last.

One of the younger boys looked hungrily at empty boxes in the locker in which they kept their tin plates, pannikins and hook-pots, and the lad who had first tightened his belt said—

"No good, my son!"

In the starboard-side of the half-deck the four apprentices of the second mate's watch were sound asleep. They'd be roused out at four o'clock when eight bells went and the watches were changed.

The young lad took a pantile from the bread barge, tried to bite it and flung the hard sea-biscuit through an open port to the sea. Disgust in his face, he cursed the skipper.

The empty boxes in the locker had once contained canned milk, canned cocoa, potted meats and such few delicacies as the four had brought from their homes when the ship sailed from the Mersey. All had been finished several weeks ago.

The two older hands had been three years at sea. The youngsters were first voyagers.

"Was the hardtack as bad last voyage?" asked one of the latter.

"Matter o' taste," said one of the older hands. "Last voyage it was soft and weevily. This voyage it's fresh and hard."

The two youngsters slumped to seats on their sea-chests, hopeless, dispirited, disgusted and famishing.

The mate's whistle blew, and one of the youngsters hurried aft in answer. He was back in a moment to call his companion.

"We've got to go up and tighten the gaskets on the mizzen-topgallantsail. The sail's working adrift," he said.

The wind whooped, the ship booming under her main-topgallantsail. The two lads went aloft, up under the stars; against which the sail could be seen working loose from its lashings.

The two older apprentices puffed at their pipes and stared at each other in the feeble glim of the half-deck lamp.

"I was down in the after hold yesterday," said one.

"I was, too. After you came up," said the other.

"Was the door open when you were down

"The Apprentice Way," copyright, 1926, by Bill Adams.

there?" asked the first speaker, and the other nodded.

They looked at each other a while in silence.

Presently one of them rose and put his pipe in his pocket; then moved toward the half-deck door.

"Where going?" asked the other.

"Aft to the booby hatch," replied his comrade.

They went side by side along the spray-spattered deck to the booby hatch directly under the narrow bridge between the two quarter-boats. The hatch was slightly open on the lee side. Its tarpaulin cover flapped in the wind.

"Keep watch for me," whispered the one who had led the way and, crawling beneath the hatch, vanished to the blackness of the hold below.

The mate strode to and fro upon the poop. The apprentice beside the hatch watched his shadowy form and, while doing so, saw the youngsters come down from the mizzen-topgallantsail and go forward again.

Presently a form arose from the hatch, and the two older lads hurried back to the half-deck. The one who had been below drew a can from under his jumper and, holding it to the lamp, read the lettering upon its label, his three companions gathering close about him.

"Canned tripe!" exclaimed one of the youngsters.

They brought their tin plates from the locker and feasted, cutting the cold tripe into four equal portions.

When the meal was done, a youngster asked—

"Where'd you get it?"

"The door between the after hold and the store room's open," answered the one who had provided the meal. "The steward leaves it open so he can take a short cut to the cook's galley with the stores."

"Let's get some more grub," exclaimed the youngster.

"Go easy," said the older hand. "Not too much hurry now!"

The two young apprentices looked questioningly at their elders. The wind shouted in the sails upon the mainmast above the half-deck. The lad who had been to the hold listened to it thoughtfully.

"We'll soon be called out to shorten sail," he said.

"We can't raid the store room now," he added. "We'll have to wait till there's a fine, dark night."

The younger lad's eyes glowed.

They sat with their heads together, planning a raid on the ship's storeroom on the first night that the weather should be steady.

A face appeared at their open port. The mate looked down on them, an amused' half suspicious look in his face. Once he too had been an apprentice. He wondered what devilment his boys were up to.

One of the older lads looked up and saw the mate there. He jumped to his feet, but the mate's face had become instantly blank. Wondering if he had heard their plans, the boys were voiceless.

"We'll take the main-topgallantsail off her," said the mate.

His whistle shrilled, calling the sailors of his watch out to clue the sail up. The apprentices hurried to the deck, one of the older ones saying:

"He'd only just come there. He didn't hear us."

Their youthful voices mingled with the shouts of the sailors as they clued up the main-topgallantsail. The sail flapped in the high glooms above.

"Four of you hop up there and furl that sail now!" said the mate, and the four apprentices jumped into the shrouds and went aloft, as much at home in the rolling rigging, in the spray-laden darks, under the swinging stars, as the lads who, dwelling contentedly ashore, are at home behind grocer's counters, in offices or at the handles of the plough.

THEY crawled out on the footropes and gathered the sail in and, having rolled it snug beneath their chests, secured it — nonchalantly as if they had been four boys who, working in a furniture store on the land, rolled a big carpet up. The sail secured, they stood together in the rigging, the ship a dim wedge a hundred and forty feet below them; her wake a long green flame astern.

"The first good night," said the boy who had been down in the hold, "two of us will make a raid on the storeroom."

The older lads grasped backstays and slid down to the deck. The younger came down the ratlines. They sat together in the half-deck again. It was almost time for one bell to go, almost a quarter to four of the morning, when they would rouse out their comrades of the starboard watch and themselves go to their bunks to sleep till breakfast time.

"Keep it quiet," said the lad who had been in the hold.

"Don't you kids breathe a word to those fellows," said the other old hand.

One bell went. Shouting, "Rise and shine, you sleepers!" they surged into the other side of the half-deck. One of them lighted the lamp. The awakened apprentices of the second mate's watch looked out at them from beneath warm blankets, sleepy but bright-eyed; then, drawing the blankets close about their chins, snoozed off again to snatch a few winks of sleep before eight bells should go.

When it was but a moment or two till all of them must muster with the foremast sailors on the quarter-deck, the other four shouted again:

"Rise and shine, you sleepers! Shake a leg! Shake a leg!"

The four who had slept since midnight tumbled out, dragged their dungaree jumpers and trousers on, dragged their big leather boots on and wriggled into oilskins. Eight bells went, and boys and men of both watches walked to the quarter-deck. A sailor called—

"All aft, sir."

The mate said—

"Relieve the wheel and lookout."

In five minutes the apprentices of the mate's watch were sound asleep under their blankets, while the four boys of the second mate's watch sat in their own side of the half-deck, gloomy in the gloomiest hour of the day.

At a quarter to five the youngest lad went to the galley to fetch the coffee. It was June in the South Atlantic. The wind of winter's night was falling as the day approached. Dying squalls whistled in the rigging.

The four apprentices sipped their sugarless coffee and nibbled hardtack from the bread barge. At five, when the second mate's whistle sounded, they went to the deck, and there, shoving long deck brooms to and fro, scoured the planks listlessly.

When the Chinese steward suddenly appeared in their midst, rising from beneath the booby hatch with his arms full of stores for the cook, one of the boys nudged another.

"I wonder if he leaves that door in the bulkhead open," he whispered.

"Tonight," said his companion, "I'm going down to see."

They looked at one another understandingly.

A sailor's day passed; the ship making southward toward ever colder, ever stormier latitudes. At breakfast the eight apprentices ate hardtack and drank unsweetened coffee. At dinner they ate salt pork, a half pannikin of lime juice to go with it. At supper they washed hard tack down with skilly from a tin pot, the inside of which was furry, its spout half choked.

"It's going to be a fine night," said one of the mate's apprentices to another, speaking low lest any boy of the second mate's watch should overhear him.

"Tonight," whispered a boy of the second mate's watch to one of his comrades, "we'll go see if the steward leaves that storeroom door open. Mum's the word!"

Night fell, starless, inky, its silence scarce broken by the lap of the sea. The breeze murmured in the gear. Under full sail the ship rode easily.

At ten o'clock one of the mate's elder boys came from the wheel, the other down from his post upon the lookout. The two youngsters looked up eagerly as their seniors entered the half-deck.

"Two and two," said the lad who had been in the store room to his fellow, and added, "I'll take one of the kids and go below. You and the other keep a sharp lookout for us."

While the apprentice who had been below before went down the booby hatch with one of the youngsters, the other two lads walked the quarter-deck. Pacing up and down, they listened for and watched every movement of the mate who prowled the bridge and poop, directly above and abaft the booby hatch.

Up and down, to and fro walked the mate. Up and down, to and fro walked the two apprentices watching him.

In the sheer blackness of the hold the elder apprentice struck a match. Its flare showed barrels and crates all about them. The cargo groaned and creaked with the light motion of the ship. A rat stared at them from bead eyes and scampered away as they crept toward the bulkhead between the after hold and the store room. Striking match after match, the older boy put dead matches in his pocket and paused presently at the open door beyond which great iron tanks containing hardtack showed by the match flares. Beyond the tanks were boxes, stowed along the ship's stringers, some of them full, some partly full of canned stores for the cabin table.

"Ss-s-s-h," whispered the elder apprentice, "the skipper's asleep right over our heads."

They crawled in, over the hardtack tanks, and lay on their bellies upon the tank manholes to listen, their faces pallid, their eyes filled with cunning and alarm, their lips moving at sight of the delicacies of the captain's table.

They crept over the hardtack tanks, toward the boxes and, reaching their goal, thrust cans beneath their jumpers. They filled capacious pockets with a cabin biscuit.

The ship's cat came to them, arching his black back and purring. He rubbed against them, and they flung him from them. His hair erect, his tail up, he spat at them; then walked me-eowing up the ladder to the steward's pantry, whence he watched them from fiery green eyes, the tip of his tail a-twitch.

The two apprentices made their silent way back from store room to hold and through the after hold to the quarter-deck, biding a while beneath the open booby hatch to be assured by their watching comrades that the coast was clear. The four returned to the half-deck.

They hid cans of tripe, of beef, of liver and onions, carrots and peas under their mattresses, in their sea-chests and among their clothing; then, opening liver and onions by unanimous choice, smacked their lips and, grinning at one another, ate to repletion.

"Two and two," said the elder of the two who had remained on deck to keep watch for the raiders. "Tomorrow night we'll take turn and turn about. You fellows keep watch while we go down."

"Don't either of you kids say a word to the second mate's watch," said the elder lads, and the youngsters said, "Not much!"

They went out and walked the deck, their stomachs full. They puffed their pipes and talked glibly of the good days when they'd all be captains.

AT MIDNIGHT they roused their fellows of the starboard watch out and looked at them commiseratingly.

"Poor hungry ——!" said they. "Poor hungry ——!"

The awakened boys looked at one another, their meaning glances missed by the four contented raiders of the store room who, when eight bells was gone, rolled into their bunks.

"If they knew our little game," said an apprentice of the second mate's watch, "they'd not call us poor hungry ——."

"Mum's the word," he added. "Not a breath to them about it, mind."

Two of the second mate's apprentices walked the quarter-deck, two went below to the darkness under the booby hatch. In a little time thereafter, while clouds hid the stars and the ship glided through a quiet sea, they feasted in the half deck. Licking their lips, their forks and their tin plates clean, they spoke of the mate's four apprentices as "poor hungry ——." With raspberry jam smeared thick on cabin biscuit, they looked at one another's berried lips, smiling and content.

The following night the boys of the mate's watch took turn and turn about, the two who had previously raided the store room keeping watch while the other two did the raiding. Later that night, while they slept, the boys of the second mate's watch took turn about likewise.

While the second mate's lads were below a squall puffed through the gear, and the second blew his whistle.

"Clue the royals up!" he cried.

One of the apprentices on watch put his head under the booby hatch cover and whistled a quick warning to the two below, who at once came stumbling, hurrying through the darkness of the hold toward the lesser gloom on deck. While the first of them clambered from the hatch, the other sought in the darkness for a can that he had let fall from under his jumper.

"Look alive, look alive!" whispered the sentinel apprentice from the deck above him and, unable to find the lost can, he left it and hastened to the air above.

While the two watchers ran to the royal gear, the two from the hold ran to the half-deck to unburden themselves of their loot. In a moment all four were shouting at the buntlines and cluelines of the royals.

"What in ——'s come over them boys?" grumbled the second mate as his apprentices shouted and joked at the gear.

When the royals were furled, they came down from aloft and sat at their little table, devouring stolen stores; and at four of the morning wakened their comrades of the starboard watch once more, and themselves rolled full-fed into their bunks, without a care in the world.

"Poor hungry ——!" they said of the lads of the mate's watch, who also, while their shipmates in the port side of the half-deck fell asleep, said to one another pityingly, "Poor hungry ——!"

At five o'clock the mate's boys went to the deck to scrub the ship down for Sunday. They worked with a will, so that the mate, looking down at them from the poop, wondered at their energy awhile. He forgot them soon, saying to himself that a boy who'd follow the sea was a fool anyway; that he was a fool himself.

At seven o'clock, when the decks were scrubbed and the paint-work was wiped off, the four apprentices of the mate's watch sat in their half-deck, waiting the time when they would rouse their comrades out. Knowing no care, they talked of ships that some day they'd command; and gave no thought at all to the savage latitudes that lay ahead, to beating westward around the Horn in June.

The doorway was suddenly darkened, and all four looked up to see the skipper standing there. His lips were thin. His eyes were cold and hard, contemptuous and filled with threat.

"Which of you young blackguards has been stealing my stores?" he demanded.

For a moment the four lads stared up at him, then from one to another with innocent faces.

"Stealing your stores, sir?" queried one of the older apprentices, disbelief in his voice.

"Stealing, sir?" queried the other, as though he doubted what his ears had heard.

A rope without the half-deck door rubbed on the mainmast. There was no other sound.

His eyes like sparks, the skipper glowed down on them.

"I'll treat you all alike till I find out who did it," he said, his accents metallic as the sound of cable links striking a hawser pipe. Then he was gone.

The innocence gone from their faces, they stared at one another, conscious suddenly that their careers were perhaps ruined, that the skipper would give them bad references when their apprentice days were done and that their guilt would cling. Their futures, as officers, were in the balance.

Words on the lips of one of the older hands were cut short by the appearance of a boy from the other side of the half-deck. He looked more guilty than they and, entering their tiny room, was followed by his three fellows.

The second mate's apprentices looked down upon the mate's.

One of the mate's old hands winked to the other.

"Which of you young blackguards has been swiping the Old Man's stores?" he asked.

A sickly grin appeared upon the face of each of the second mate's apprentices. One turned upon another.

"If you hadn't dropped that can in the hold," he said, "we'd not have been caught. The steward must have found it when he passed that way this morning."

The mate's boys sat upright and, blank astonishment on their faces, looked unbelievingly at one another and at the boys of the starboard watch.

"You ducks have been swiping cabin grub, eh?" asked one of the mate's boys.

"We raided the store room last night and the night before. You ought to see the stack of grub we've got hidden under our mattresses," said one of the starboard watch.

One of the mate's apprentices rose to his feet. He stepped to his bunk and rolled his mattress back.

"Look there," said he.

For an instant there was silence, broken only by the rubbing of a rope upon the mainmast without the half-deck door. Then came a burst of laughter, which was quickly quelled by an older apprentice, who said:

"Shut up! The mate'll hear us."

"Who's going to own up?" asked one.

They talked the matter over, eight young thieves together, with their futures darkened, yet, since their stomachs were full, not altogether discontented.

"It's all you fellows' faults," said one of the port watch lads. "You gave the show away dropping that stuff in the after hold."

The starboard watch boys demurred, saying that since the eight of them together must have taken the bulk of the skipper's cabin stores, the theft must soon have been discovered in any case.

For a quarter of an hour they argued to and fro and, at the end of it, the oldest of the second mate's lads said:

"We'll take the blame, then. That cursed can is what's called a technicality. Let it go at that! We're guilty."

IT WAS settled so. But the oldest hand of the mate's watch said: "If it's just to be a case of plain sea misery, slave and starvation, you fellows can take your medicine. You deserve it anyway. But if it comes to the Old Man giving you bad references when your time is up, we all chip in together."

Rueful and but half repentant, the apprentices of the second mate's watch loaded the stolen stores into gunny sacks and walked aft to yield them up.

In a few minutes they were back in the half-deck again, the sacks still over their shoulders. The mate's watch looked at them questioningly.

"What did the Old Man say?" asked one.

"He said, 'You've stolen stores. You can keep them and take the consequences!' " replied the oldest to the second's boys.

A whoop of joy rose from the eight of them. They sat down and stuffed themselves, forgetting future miseries in the satisfaction of today. But as, at eight bells, the mate's boys rolled into their bunks, the Chinaman appeared at the half-deck door.

"Captain, he say more better boys fetchem back stores alee same," said he.

They swore at the Old Man for changing his mind. Grinning at each other they said—

"I guess he's found out that he hasn't got many stores left below, eh?"

Once more the second mate's apprentices loaded the gunny sacks and carried them to the cabin door, where the Chinaman tallied the loot while the Old Man stood glowering by.

That day when noon came the eight of them sat down to scant allowance of salt pork. They were glum. They dared not look ahead to the day when the Old Man should give them bad references at the end of their apprenticeships. They spoke dismally of the wild wintry cape that lay ahead, where in bitter weather they must labor on the bare Board of Trade 'whack.'

Day by day the mates watched them take their punishment—harder work with less food for all of them, while every day grew more chill, more dreary than its predecessor.

The ship came to the corner of Staten Land and, entering the Cape Horn waters, lurched in a tumbling and tide-distressed sea, while to the northward the snow-covered headlands shone in a sunless mid-winter morning. A light wind blew from the westward and, with the ship pointing toward the Antarctic, the mate blew his whistle.

"Hoist the main royal!" he ordered.

While albatross peered down to them and the sea gulls cried, the sailors and boys of the mate's watch hoisted the royal to its masthead.

"One more pull," growled a sailor, and while the mate cried, "That's well. Belay!" they all lay back on the halyards.

There was a sharp crack aloft. Strained by one pull too many, the royal halyards parted and the yard, dropping to the head of the royal rigging, smashed into two pieces.

The falling halyard block fell toward the deck and, while the mate swore at sight of the smashed spar, came fairly down upon the head of the older apprentice who had led the raid to the store room the first night. He dropped and lay still on the deck planks, a trickle of blood running over his cheek.

The mate stepped up and bent above him, feeling his wrist and listening to his heart.

"Pick him up and take him aft," he said, and the other three apprentices raised their pallid comrade and bore him to the cabin door.

The Old Man looked down upon them there and, with a gesture, bade them bear the unconscious lad into the cabin; then, having stayed to give the mate orders for the repair of the smashed spar, followed after them.

While the three apprentices returned to the deck, the Old Man and his wife looked down at the injured lad who, mumbling incoherently, opened his eyes and stared up at them. The Old Man raised him and set him in a chair at the cabin table and, with a nod to his wife, went back to the deck.

Silently the woman fetched basin and towels and washed the scalp wound clean, while the apprentice who had instigated the port watch's raid on the storeroom, his hurts soothed by gentle fingers, wondered what had befallen him.

When the wound was dressed and the boy's head swathed in bandages, the captain's wife stepped back to look at him. A quiet smile on her lips, she asked—

"Could you eat a little bacon and some doughnuts?"

Scarcely believing his ears, the apprentice gazed up at her.

"Bacon and doughnuts!" he repeated in a low voice.

The captain's wife set a dish before him, seated at the cabin table for all the world as though he were an officer. She looked on him with a grave face.

"I'm glad," said she, "the captain and I are both glad that you were not one of the boys who stole our stores."

His mouth full of doughnuts, bland innocence in his eyes, the apprentice murmured—

"Yes, ma'am."

"Come to the cabin this evening and I'll dress your head again," she told him when his meal was done, and on unsteady feet, his face very pale, the lad went out to the deck and to the apprentice's quarters.

His comrades sat at their hard tack and sugarless coffee.

"Been eating bacon and doughnuts," said he, "and drinking cabin coffee."

"You lucky ——!" said his comrades. "You lucky ——!"

"Lucky is right," he murmured and, having climbed into his bunk and rolled himself snug in his blankets, he peered down at them to add, "And the Old Man and his missis are glad that I'm no darned thief."

Imprecations rose from his companions. They swore at him volubly and cursed him for the greatest thief and liar of them all.

"If you weren't about half dead we'd kill you," they vowed.

Closing his eyes, he murmured happily—

"Bacon and doughnuts, bacon and doughnuts."

At evening, when he knew that supper in the cabin was over, he walked aft again. The wind was fallen away. Icicles hung in the rigging. Flat sails drooped, sheathed in ice. His messmates in the half-deck supped on hard tack and skilly, but he, when his wound was dressed, ate the leavings of the officer's table. When he returned to his comrades he grinned at them cheerily, saying—

"Glad I'm not in your class, you thieving young blackguards!"

THAT night it blew from the westward, and he lay in his bunk while the others furled sail in the darkness. In the morning he carefully fingered his wound, lest it heal too fast, and when he knew that breakfast was over in the cabin walked aft once more. The mate watched him when, his wound dressed and his stomach full, he went forward again and seeing that he walked on confident feet, ordered him to his old place at the ropes with the rest of the crew; so that his apprentice comrades jeered him.

Though a full week passed, his wound remained unhealed, for he fingered it constantly with careful touch. Morning and night he went to the cabin to have it dressed; but on the seventh day the woman said—

"It's queer how this doesn't heal, boy!"

"Yes, ma'am," said he.

At her next words his face fell.

"I guess it'll be all right now, anyway. You don't need to come aft any more."

The Horn winds wailed as he returned to his comrades in the half-deck. Envying him, they had long ago ceased to upbraid him for a thief and a liar. They wished, each of them, that their heads might also be broken.

Soaked by the pounding seas, their hands sore from fisting hard sails, their palms and the joints of their fingers split by the cold, they sat disconsolate and hungry.

In a lull between squalls that night the mate looked in on his four apprentices.

"You fellows haven't any guts," said he, "I'm ashamed of you."

They looked at him dumbly, unbelievingly, and stretched out for him to see their broken hands, their knuckles skinned and raw.

"That young liar's the best of you," said the mate, ignoring their hands and nodding to the lad whose head had been broken. "He knows a good thing when he sees it," he added.

They looked at the mate from weary eyes, and the mate shook his head.

"The second mate's boys have got the stuff in 'em," said he. "You fellows haven't any go in you."

"I'll bet the Old Man don't think that, sir," said the apprentice whose head had been broken. "The other watch are a gang of thieves."

"You haven't any guts," said the mate. "Didn't you know that storeroom door was open?"

The amazed apprentices stared at each other and from each other to their mate. They smiled, and their smiles widened. They sat back on their sea-chests and rocked with laughter, while the mate watched them, perplexed.

"What in thunder's got you?" he demanded.

They told him how they had been the first to raid the storeroom, and how they had put the guilt upon the shoulders of their comrades of the other watch. When their tale was done and the mate stood scowling, they added eagerly—

"If the Old Man gives them bad references, we're going to chip in and stand the gaff with them, sir."

Saying, "Well, I'll be ——," the mate, a relieved look on his face, turned to leave them.

They crowded after him, the one whose head had been broken saying—

"You'll not split on us, sir?"

"Play your own game," said he. "As long as you play it square, it's none of my affair."

He banged the door behind him. A moment later his face appeared at their port.

"The Old Man's written to the owners about the second mate's boys," he said. "He's going to give them all bad references. I guess you'll have to chip in."

When he was gone they sat gloomy round their table, their shoulders humped. Wet to the skin, they shivered, their feet freezing. They rubbed pork grease into the splits of their finger joints and on their cracked palms.

When at midnight they roused the second mate's boys they told them what the mate had said—that the Old Man had already written to the owners, that their careers were ruined.

The night was still, the ship hidden in utter darkness. No sea fowl screamed. No star shone. At earliest dawn all hands, men and boys of both watches, were called out to shovel the snow from her decks. Under a bitter sky the eight apprentices moved on hopeless feet.

It was close to eight o'clock, broad dismal daylight. A few gulls slept on the sea or drifted on the drifting ice cakes.

The apprentices looked at the sailors amidst whom they labored—men who would never be but what they were, foremast sailors, slaves to a severe existence. They saw themselves as such in the years to be. When the Old Man appeared on the poop they swore, cursing him among themselves for a hard-hearted ——. They voiced hopes that the ship might never win her way about the wintry cape, that she might go to the bottom and take the old —— and themselves with her.

"A poor —— dog's life," they muttered.

Like the foremast hands, they worked as beings without hope or caring; as though hope were dead within them. Unutterably weary after weeks of wild weather, of days and nights spent in fisting frozen sails under a merciless sky, the foremast sailors spoke longingly of how drunk they'd get if ever the ship won through to San Francisco.

THE Old Man went below to breakfast, the mate accompanying him. The second mate passed forward and disappeared beneath the forecastle head. The ship appeared like a floating monument to misery.

A cry rang from the lips of one of the apprentices, who looked toward the south. Men and boys looked whither he pointed.

From east to west, along the gray expanses of a leaden sea, a row of upreared white water teeth, a line of tempest driven uphurled wave crests was rushing upon the erect ship. The southern sky was become in an instant like the folds of a billowing and inky curtain.

A foremast sailor shouted and ran for the second mate who, appearing from beneath the forecastle head, stared a moment aghast at the south.

Wind smote them. The sea leaped upon them. The ship staggered, and the voice of the second mate was drowned in all-enveloping chaos. Birds whirled by. The atmosphere was become hard, a crystalline clearness through which the upthrown sprays drove like gravel fired from the mouths of cannon, Dipping lower and lower, the lee railing lay down to the sea.

The Old Man and mate appeared on the poop, the mate dropping instantly to the main deck, where he bellowed commands that went unheard.

Under her topsails and main topgallantsail the ship trembled like a creature terrified at the insistence of unescapable doom.

Sailors were swept from their feet. Seas washed the deep snow from the deck. Shovels that hurtled to the scuppers hurtled unheard, all lesser turmoils lost in the wind's fury. Men clung cowering to the lifelines, their heads bowed, the breath beaten from them.

The mate, a hunched form whose black

oilskin coat floated in waist deep water about him, bobbed like a mad black domino toward the main topgallant halyards. He appeared like the invulnerable and defying son of a devil as, his hands upon the halyards, his eyes on the men and boys, he lowered the sail away.

The topgallantsail slid down and, hanging above the unyielding storm topsail below it, ballooned in its gear, while the pine topgallantmast bent and sprang like a whip. Pointing upward to the threshing sail, mate and second mate yelled orders to the sailors who, such of them as were aware of the mates or caught their meaning, remained cowering at the lifelines.

The Old Man, seeing from his post upon the poop the futility of his dismayed foremast hands, blanched.

The apprentice whose head had been broken, surrounded by his comrades, his head and shoulders visible above the swirling seas, saw the Old Man and, his voice shrill as the cry of a gale-delighting sea bird, shouted a challenge. His voice was inaudible.

He thumped the oilskinned shoulder of the lad beside him and looked into his face. Moved with a common thought, the eight apprentices questioned one another for an instant only, their lips tight shut, only their faces speaking.

"The mast'll go!" yelled the apprentice.

He fought toward and clambered into the main shrouds, his comrades at his heels. Eight pairs of bare hands reached up, higher and higher. Southwesters, blown from the apprentices' heads, whipped over the sea.

Back at the Old Man's side, the mate stared up at his and the second mate's apprentices, above whom the strained mast quivered, the ballooning sail upon the main-topgallant yard a white drum half visible in fury of cloud and of water.

"If the mast goes, they're gone!" roared the Old Man, his lips at the mate's ear.

"My ——! My ——!" the Old Man muttered, his eyes and the mate's eyes on the climbing children of the sea.

The eight apprentices came to the rocking spar and crawled out along its foot-ropes. Ice, knocked from the rigging and ropes by their heavy boots, flew off in the storm. Blood of their fingertips momentarily tinged white canvas that was instantly washed clean again. The sail beat on them. The wind beat on them. Clouds enveloped them, obliterating their shapes. Their arms beat up and down.

They gathered the sail in and, rolling it beneath their chests, bore hard upon it and lashed it to the spar. They shouted to one another, hard, defiant looks in their eyes, their faces pale as the crests of the sea a hundred and forty feet below them.

They sat presently in the half-deck once more, their chests heaving. They bent above bleeding hands, into the cracks of which they rubbed pork grease.

One of the older boys spoke.

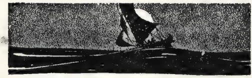
"No —— good," he said, "our hash is cooked. It's all for nothing."

The lad whose head had been broken rose to his feet, and they all looked up at him. His skinned red hands, his bloody fingertips held out to them, he spoke:

"I don't give a ——," he said. "If that mast'd gone, she'd have been in a fine mess."

They brought hard tack from the bread barge and sipped their bitter coffee.

The Old Man stood in his cabin, his wife seated on the settee beside him. He opened a desk drawer and took therefrom a letter. While his wife smiled up to him, he opened the port and dropped the letter to the sea, above which it flew, borne high on the storm and followed by a hundred screaming sea fowl.



TRIAL BY FIRE

by Ernest Haycox

DOCTOR BRENT was up early that morning on a call to the widow Potter's, a mile or so down the road from his own house. In fact a very frightened young Potter grandson had come a-tapping on his door quite before dawn and brought him back to the fevered old lady. The doctor exercised his skill, waited for a more favorable sign from the patient and then, near breakfast, got upon his horse and returned slowly toward his own hearth, meditating a little upon the wonderful vitality of these simple-living New England people.

The day promised to be hot. There was in the air that forecast of sultriness not uncommon to June weather, and over in the direction of Boston town the sun hovered below the sea's edge, striking upward with its blood-red rays. The doctor, rubbing his ruddy cheeks, wondered how Gage and his soldiers enjoyed their forced idleness in the town. His professional instinct led him to emit a small cluck of pity.

"Poor ——," he murmured, bending in the saddle, "they'll be sadly needing fresh foods. I doubt not there's much scurvy and camp disease among them."

Well, he mused, it was a great deal Gage's own fault. He had permitted himself to be cooped up and surrounded by a half-organized patriot army. The doctor, whose opinions were staunchly Tory, frowned. He had thought this was going to be a stalemate and that after a time the farmers, collecting their better senses and cooling their rage following the affair of Lexington and Concord, would disperse and go back to their occupations. It was not so. Old Artemas Ward commanded an army of sixteen thousand men, stretched from Charlestown Neck to Dorchester way. And night before last there had been whisperings of a sortie against the British. The air seemed to have grown more charged with desperate possibilities in the forty-eight hours' elapsing. It was murmured, too, that the Committee of Safety had come to a bold decision and had given Ward his moving orders. But where and when? From Medford to Roxbury the countryside was in a ferment of anticipation, and the tag ends of rumors and fears came back to the doctor in a most tantalizing and distressing form.

The horse quickened his pace. The doctor emerged from his thoughts and raised his head to perceive a strange sight along the road. It had grown quite light now, and the sun's top quarter was above the horizon. Ahead of him in the road, raising the dust as they traveled, advanced a group of men. Not in formation, but in ones and twos and small parties; stringing along at greater and lesser intervals as far as the winding highway could be viewed. The doctor's surprized eyes counted perhaps two score such, and momentarily he noted others straggling out of the farmhouses by

---

"Trial by Fire," copyright, 1926, by Ernest Haycox.

the wayside, all setting their faces in the common direction.

What seemed stranger still was the equipment they carried. Each, so far down the road as Doctor Brent could distinguish, had some sort of game or provision pouch thrown over the shoulder. Each had his powder horn and cartridge box. In one hand was the inevitable musket. And as the foremost came upon the amazed doctor he saw that their countenances were almost uniformly patterned. Some seemed dourer than others and some seemed highly excited; he began to distinguish angry voices in the foremost group and mild voices. But all were of a resolved countenance, quite as if they had deliberated upon some course and made their minds in favor of it. Brent drew the horse aside and bent his attention to the first few.

"What's this?" he demanded. "Where's the drill to be so early in the morning?"

The conversation, he noticed with a touch of sorrow and wounded pride, ceased as they drew near. They stopped out of respect to his profession, and one or two touched their caps, not deferentially, but more as a courtesy long established and hard to forget. Yet one and all seemed strangely lacking in speech. Presently the first group was joined by others, and they, also, had nothing to offer the wondering Brent. He struck the side of his saddle and swore gruffly.

"Are you tongue-tied? ——, I know you —every mother's son—as well as I know my name, and yet I can't get a civil answer! What is all this fuss about? Where is the drill?"

At length one ventured to break the silence.

"Guess it ain't a drill, Doctor. Other things afoot, maybe."

"What, then?" asked Brent with a little sinking of heart. He knew that stubborn countenance and that mild speech of old. They would say little but think mightily. And it took a charge of powder to change their minds. "What, then?" he repeated after a long interval.

"Don't know as I should tell you," replied the speaker. "Ain't aimin' to be short with you, Doctor, but I don't rightly guess you got a right to know."

"Mystery—mummery," retorted Brent, trying to break through the wall. "Are you taking on airs to me, sir?"

After another long and reluctant interval the man replied with the same soft-spoken doggedness.

"Why no, Doctor, that ain't hardly right to say. But I don't just guess I got a right to tell or you to know."

A more reckless spirit had joined them.

"What's the harm?" he demanded. "It's daylight now. Guess the job's been done. I ain't afraid to tell that 'tarnal leech—"

There was an instant disapproval, and the bold one hushed.

"May be daylight and all that," said the spokesman, "but it ain't our part to talk. Leave the officers do that if they're a mind to. Guess we're only wasting time here, too."

He nodded to the doctor and went on, followed by the augmented group.

Brent urged the horse homeward, his serenity ruffled, his pride touched. At short intervals he passed others; one and all they seemed reluctant to meet his eye, though he knew and called each by name. Ever since public opinion had crystallized, months ago, and sides had been taken, his patients and patriot neighbors had withdrawn their confidences from him, though not their ills. But not until now had they appeared so unwilling even to acknowledge him. They turned their faces away or they met his greeting in stony silence or with a muttered word that was no answer at all. And so he went on, gaining no information, but being constantly met with the selfsame rebuff. It only served to whet his curiosity, and at last when he came to his own house and saw Caleb Gorham, an old, infirm friend, hobbling along the road like the rest, he instantly got off his horse and protested.

"By Godfrey, I put you to bed yesterday and told you to stay there. What's this foolishness?"

But his friend, too, had changed.

"Figger I'll have to disobey those orders, Isaac."

And he kept his way, face averted. Brent crossed the yard and took Gorham by the shoulders.

"See here, what in the name of sense is happening? Come in the house."

"No, Isaac, it wouldn't look just right for me to be goin' in your house this partic'lar mornin'."

Doctor Brent swore again.

"Caleb, I have not been ashamed to cross your door-sill and you shall not be ashamed to cross mine! Come. I'll have an answer from some one."

Gorham walked toward the door reluctantly, turning as one of his passing neighbors hailed him in reproof.

"You got other chores to do, Caleb."

The old man nodded.

"Be there in a minute," he answered, and entered the doctor's house.

A small fire had been built in the hearth against the morning chill. The table was set and the cakes were steaming in the platter.

"Better eat with me," suggested Brent. His wife came out of the pantry and he motioned at the table. "Another plate for Caleb."

"No," said Gorham firmly. "Ain't got time for sociableness."

"You'll have time to die, though, if you disobey my orders," said Brent darkly.

"Guess a man can die when the time comes," was Gorham's stout reply.

The weight of his musket was heavy for his old arms, and he leaned the weapon against the door. His fingers were rheumatic and gnarled and his cheeks receded from a thin, long nose. When he spoke it was with a strong nasal quality; his eyes snapped.

"You mustn't push friendship, Isaac, when it's times like these. Folks know you and me have been real thick. But a neighbor's patience ain't long in war."

"This township," retorted Brent, "must take me as I am. Before all this nonsense about taxes and freedom came up they were glad enough to know me and use me. Now they want my service but not my friendship. Well, every man to his opinion. I keep mine, and so long as the folks keep me here to listen to their tales of sickliness, they must bear my politics."

"Guess we need all the doctors we got," said Gorham, "or you'd gone packing with the Tory lawyers and parsons. But you been a mighty good doctor. Only in time of war it pays a man to sing low and mind his business. You understand? Folks ain't in a sociable humor."

"War?"

THE older man looked out of the window with his worn, wistful face and watched his neighbors trooping down the road. He sighed.

"Guess it don't make any difference now. Daylight's come and the job finished. Last night Prescott and fifteen hundred men crossed Charlestown Neck and threw up earthworks on Breed's Hill. We people are goin' over to help out if a fight comes. Now you see, Isaac?"

Brent turned from his friend and went to the fireplace, his ruddy face losing a measure of its color. For a considerable time he stared at the flames.

"Why," said he, at last, "has every one avoided telling me this? I can't do your cause any harm, even if I were inclined."

"Part of our nature, I guess. It goes against the grain to tell a Tory anything—even a friendly one."

The last of the fagots in the hearth fell apart with a little flurry. The doctor's wife came into the room again, saw the two men standing so grimly apart and withdrew silently. Brent struck a fist against the wall.

"Every day you come nearer to open rebellion. And to think there was a time not long ago when men still kept their heads and were at peace. Now I'm a '—— Tory leech' and if it were not because they needed me I'd be run into Boston with the rest. What a state of affairs!"

"You've got to break eggs to make a cake," returned Gorham. "It's a just cause, and the time's gone by for talking."

"But plenty of time for men to be killed and wounded, eh? Listen to me, Caleb. It takes many years to make a man, and but one bullet to dissolve him. Have you hotheads thought of that? I will never believe the country moved deliberately to such a pass. It has all been the work of a few scurvy agitators. Hancock loses a few pounds profit because of the embargo, and lo! he turns in fury. And what does Adams think of Lexington and Concord? Why, it was a bright and glorious morning when he heard firing! No, Caleb, these few agitators have worked the minds of honest men, and now you go to fight, embroiled in an argument not of your own making. An argument that might have been settled peaceably, with a little cool patience. An agitator's war, and other poor —— must bleed for that folly!"

Gorham picked up his gun.

"It is strange, Isaac, that you know the people so illy. I think you underrate our minds and our temper." He opened the door and crossed the sill. For a moment he appeared to be framing some other sentence, but in the end he turned his cadaverous face to the doctor and dropped it an inch by way of farewell. Some one called him from the road and, in a few strides, he had joined company and was off toward Charlestown Neck, tramping down the dusty highway.

Brent closed the door and went back to the breakfast table. The cakes were stone cold, but that mattered little. He found no appetite and, after a mouthful, got up and set to traversing the broad kitchen.

"Aye," he muttered, "it is an agitator's war. The rest follow like sheep. Presently there'll be a slaughter, and then it will be a mess. Faugh! Widows crying and the English ministry very ugly. Why can't they use peaceful means?"

His wife came back.

"The cakes are cold, and you have eaten nothing, Isaac. I'll make fresh ones."

"No, I'm not hungry. It's the cursed bullets I think about. Imagine a man of Gorham's age and condition shouldering a musket. There'll be suffering before night, I fear."

He crossed to the window and looked upon the road. There were fewer men passing his house, but farther away on the main road to Charlestown Neck he saw the dust rolling higher under the feet of the gathering artisans and farmers. It only served to increase his restlessness. He ranged from bookshelf to hearth like one sorely perplexed.

"Who's to stanch the bleeding, I should like to know?"

Presently he heard his wife moving in the bedroom and afterwards the sound of ripping cloth emerged.

"What's that?" he called.

The door opened and she stood with her hands holding a table spread.

"I'm tearing linen," said she.

"Aye, I guess that's right. They put their faith in me. If the fools will fight, it is part of the bargain I must patch them up."

And thereupon he clapped his hat to his head and reached for his instrument case. His wife held out the bandage strips she had torn and these he stuffed into the case. For a little while they stood undecided in the center of the room. It was quite as if he were going out on such a call as he had answered a thousand times before.

"You have everything, Isaac?"

"Why, yes, I believe so."

"Better sit to a bite of breakfast. It may be after dinner before you reach home."

"Not hungry."

He paused on the door-sill and groped for a word. It was unusual for him to do this; just as unusual as it was for the woman to stand and wait for him to go. A call was a call and the years had drilled them to the exigencies of a doctor's life. A silent, tempered couple, given more to work than to affection. And yet the doctor, looking toward the rising dust, seemed puzzled. Finally he flung out an arm.

"Take care of yourself."

"This is the day for you to visit Missis Hammersley, Isaac."

"That is not serious. She must wait." Presently he was on the horse, riding toward Charlestown Neck.

THE sun had started downward in the sultry sky when Doctor Brent reached that part of the road which trailed across the narrow Charlestown Neck. Through all of the journey he had passed many men dressed in their workaday clothes, all armed and all trudging onward toward the scene of impending hostilities with that set manner. They were young, they were old. Some walked buoyantly; others communed with themselves. And by and by, after seeing so many, the affair began to take on the cast of deadly earnestness. Brent clucked his tongue.

"There will be bloodshed."

When her eached the Neck he found troops lying by, as if waiting for a call. One or two companies were marching across, and behind these Brent took his path.

It was no longer peaceful. The British ships had opened fire upon the Neck, and the great balls, falling here and there, created havoc in the orderly ranks. These reinforcing troops were not accustomed to round shot. They broke and sought cover, dodging this way and that. By and by a runner popped over a slope and came onward. He passed the troops and hailed them with a word of advice. He saw Brent on the horse and stopped.

"Man," said he, wiping the sweat from his face. "I've no wish to discourage you, but it's a sorry place for a mounted man beyond the brow of the hill. You'll do better afoot and I'll do better in the saddle, for I've got to reach Cambridge in short time."

"There's action ahead, then?" queried the doctor, stroking the neck of his animal.

"Within this half hour there'll be —— poppin' around the corner, and don't you forget it," said the messenger, rolling his eyes.

The doctor meditated briefly. It was not of his mind to render any aid, other than his own professional skill, to these stubborn rebels. And yet it would not do to cut off his nose to spite his face. His horse was a good horse, and he had an affectionate regard for the steed. It would be wise to act on the courier's suggestion. He dismounted.

"You'd do me a service if, after reaching Cambridge, you would bring the horse back to the Big Oak tavern and tether it there."

The courier mounted and swung around toward the mainland.

"That I'll do," he agreed and galloped away.

"Good enough," said the doctor, and pursued his way. The advancing companies had spread out on the easy grade of Bunker Hill and were climbing rapidly. The doctor, not used to so much foot work, found himself breathing heavily. Finally he gained the summit to find himself among a few reserve companies. But what interested him most was the striking view that spread below him. On Breed's Hill, forty feet lower, was the result of Prescott's night surprize, an irregularly square redoubt commanding the crown of the hill. On the left flank of it was a breastworks and still far to the left and rear, as a sort of insurance against the redoubt's being enfiladed, a stout line of men was stationed behind a rail fence. It was a formidable picture; a picture that needed but one stroke of the brush for completion. And that was forthcoming. As the doctor scanned the broken land farther toward the sea he caught the glint of bayonets and the bright red of British soldiery. There was a tapping of drums and the piping of fifes born faintly upward. Then one by one the battalions of the British army unrolled before him and started a steady march across the slope toward the provincial stronghold.

"By Godfrey!" exclaimed the doctor.

His heart pounded sluggishly and the ruddy cheeks flamed. Without further ado he started downward, through the scattered ranks of the reserves, aiming for the redoubt. There, he decided, would be the main focus of battle, for there was the key to defense. He broke into a dog trot, stumbled in the tall meadow grass and went the faster.

"By Godfrey!" he repeated.

The British ships were pouring their fire upon the hill and the thunder echoed and re-echoed across the bay. But on this prospective field of struggle only an occasional musket report reached the doctor. He crawled over a fence, arrived at the foot of the Bunker Hill slope and found himself inside the line of breastworks. He climbed a little way and presently arrived outside the tall parapets of the redoubt. He skirted the structure some distance, discovered the one narrow sallyport it boasted and squeezed his way through. He was, at last, in the cockpit of trouble.

It was a small place, not more than fifty feet on a side, with parapets some six feet in height. At present those parapets were closely crowded with the provincials, each man with his piece leveled across the top and trained on the advancing British. At one place a marksman had coolly elected to stand on the parapet and waited for the command to fire. Some of the more eager anticipated this command, and Doctor Brent saw then the vigorous veteran Prescott leap up to the parapet and run around it with his sword drawn. Here and there he knocked up the gun muzzles.

"——!" exclaimed Prescott. "Hold your fire! Watch for the quality of their clothes. Mind, the better the uniform the higher the rank. Watch for the officers and aim low to kick the dust in their eyes. Steady!"

The drums grew clearer, the arpeggio notes of the fifes warbled shriller. Doctor Brent, standing in the center of the redoubt, had no vision of what happened outside the walls. But he could feel the tightening of nerves, hear the hush of men's voices and note the hunching of shoulders as they took aim. The cannon shot stopped, and in the brief intermission there arrived the voices of the British officers encouraging their men, rallying them to the glory of the regimentals.

Off to the left at the angle of the rail fence the fury burst in full force. Then Brent seemed to feel a blast at his heart, and his ears rang with the roaring of the guns as the defenders of the redoubt took up the challenge. Men began to shout. The dust rose thickly and the thud of British balls pattered against the earthen wall. The exposed marksman fired methodically, handed his gun down and was given another. Out of the smoke and the inferno of musketry Brent's waiting ear caught an only too significant sound—a drawn, half-suppressed cry of pain. Turning, he saw a stout fellow reel back and catch his side in amazement. There was a grotesque wrinkling of his tanned face and a widening of honest eyes.

"They took me!" he gasped. "They took me!"

He dropped his gun and staggered. Brent sprang forward and received the falling body in his arms.

The smell of powder rolled back and stifled the doctor. As he put the dying man on the ground and endeavored to check the fast spurting blood, he heard the groaning of many voices beyond the parapet. He shook his head sorrowfully. Many a brave soul out on that bullet-ploughed field would shortly be pleading for mercy and for water; neither of which, in the high tide of conflict, could be given them. The man on the ground collected himself and shivered as if from cold. Doctor Brent ceased his efforts and, out of long habit, folded the lifeless hands.

"Soon enough," he soliloquized, "there'll not be time for even this. A hot and furious day."

It was hot enough. The rifle firing diminished; the loud commands of the British officers died away. Around the parapet rose a parched and jubilant cry. Presently the provincials had relaxed and turned their sweating faces inward to open their cartridge boxes, ram home the charge and prime the pan. They were grimed of cheek, heavy-eyed and tortured by thirst. Not a man had slept in thirty hours and, during all the day previous to the infantry attack, a heavy shower of round shot from the British men-o'-war had played upon their position.

Still they were grimly confident. They had been under fire, and the nervousness of inexperience was no longer with them. Brent, looking with professional eye, was somewhat surprized at the business-like manner in which they went about their tasks. Prescott walked around the walls, calling out his orders. A heavy, crimson-jowled man in a slap-dash general's uniform crowded through the sallyport and likewise circled the walls. It was Putnam. As he traveled he seemed to radiate a positive assurance that the day was won. Here and there he tarried to speak with old friends. Always his hearty voice came back to Brent, reiterating the selfsame assurance.

"You know, men, you're the best shots on earth. Not a man of you but what knows a gun inside and out. You did well this first charge. Now hold the fire longer still. If they want this hill they must pay for it!"

"They come again!"

The cry passed from mouth to mouth, and the besiegers returned to their positions at the parapet. It had seemed but a moment's intermission to Brent as he went about his work of patching up the wounded and giving assurance to the dying. He heard again the reiteration of drum and fife; the sun seemed to beat down more oppressively as it went westering. Somewhere on the left the field pieces began to speak and the dust to rise. As before, the British officers took up the challenge when they neared the redoubt.

"Gallant dogs!" said a man at the parapet, training his musket. "Will ye notice how they pick a way over the dead 'uns? Ye'd think they marched on Sunday parade! Cool!"

THE air quivered with the tension. There was that digging-in of feet and hunching of shoulders. The god of battle held his breath. In the hush Brent thought he heard the scuff of British feet and the slap of British accoutrements.

Berramm!

A continuous rolling and flashing of muskets ran down the line. Back upon the doctor arrived the acrid powder smoke and the labored cries of the freshly wounded. Here and there the parapet showed a gap. Men were kneeling and men were sprawled out in stark silence. The shouting of the British officers seemed, on the moment, to become small and lonely. A mutter of satisfaction trembled on the lips of the defenders. The god of war, somewhere above the struggle, peered between the rolling clouds and was still unsatisfied. The scales trembled and the British retreated doggedly down the hill, their ranks decimated and their officers sadly reduced. Still they had the will to close upon that redoubt wall. At the bottom of the slope they halted, threw off their heavy packs, closed the empty gaps and gathered their weary bodies for a last desperate try. In one section nine men dressed up ranks that earlier had been forty strong. Across the water in Boston town the loyalists watched the scene in silent horror. The day had turned bloody, sinister.

Within the redoubt was a different scene. The first two assaults had been repulsed with a great expense of ammunition, and it was now nearly gone. The recharging of muskets left most of the powder horns and cartridge boxes empty. Prescott hurried a detail out for a few cannon cartridges and these, broken open, augmented the supply.

"When that goes," added the veteran, "we fall back to bayonets."

Brent, working feverishly, felt again a slow churning of his heart. His ruddy cheeks suffused with color. These men could fight! They were not afraid to die. They stuck to their places as if bent on taking root there. Suddenly, in passing from one wounded provincial to another, he saw upon the ground, with a wistful face to the smoke-obscured sky, the old and rheumatic Caleb Gorham. Brent dropped to his knee and spoke sharply.

"Caleb, where did they strike you?"

Gorham shook his head and twitched a finger weakly.

"Won't do you any good to find out, Isaac. I'm past mendin' now."

"I told you to keep away from here," muttered the doctor, ripping open his friend's vest. Upon the bony chest he saw death's signature written by a heavy ball from a Tower musket. He closed the shirt and eased Gorham's head.

"——, Caleb, you were always stubborn to deal with! Did I not tell you there'd be time enough to die if you disobeyed me?"

The watery, wistful eyes closed sleepily. Gorham took hold of the doctor's hand and gave it faint pressure.

"I'd died anyhow, Isaac. Had a chance to make a good bargain, so I took it. Yankee blood. Can't overlook a bargain."

It had been long since Isaac Brent had been called upon to express emotion, and it came out now in the characteristic way, a brusk reproof.

"And what about your wife, you old idiot?"

"Ah! She'll—be a—proud—widder," said Gorham, and died.

The men of the redoubt found their voices. A warning found its way around the parapet, and wearily the fighters took place. Brent saw a black spiral of smoke rising skyward, and asked one of those at the parapet whence it came.

"Charlestown burnin'."

"Here they come, boys!"

"Godfrey!" exclaimed Brent. "When will they have enough?"

But the god of war had decided to force the issue. The drums and the fifes sounded defiantly. Brent heard less of officers now. Something in the silence of the upward striving soldiery challenged the provincials. They fiddled with their weapons and dug their heels well in as if to resist the shock. Of a sudden, from the left flank, artillery began to rake the redoubt. The earth geysered high. Prescott spoke amid the absolute silence of his men.

"Save your powder. Let not a grain be wasted in a foolish shot."

"Ain't got none to save," muttered one. "By Joshua, I'd give a peck o' money fer two charges."

Brent, standing in the center of the redoubt, felt a rising excitement grip him, as the wave of British rolled nearer. As well as his instruments allowed he had cared for the wounded. There was nothing left for him to do but go with the tide. If it came to bayonet and bayonet the British must conquer, for not one provincial in four was equipped with the blade. He looked speculatively at a gun discarded by a dead man.

As on the two previous occasions, the storm burst suddenly. One tremendous blast of gunfire issued from the redoubt, and for a third time the smoke swirled back and dimmed the setting sun. Brent choked and closed his eyes. The effect of that volley was only too audible to his ears. He wondered how the attackers, so openly exposed and so indiscriminately stricken down, could continue on.

But continue on they did. A shout of warning echoed in the redoubt and a rush was made toward the south parapet. The British, right under the outside scarp, set up a vigorous huzzah. Bayonet tips glinted over the top. The scene began to partake of disorder and confusion. Amid the choking dust Brent saw his comrades rushing toward the focal point of conflict. A British officer, his scarlet facings showing dimly through the smoke, sprang over at the head of his company and died immediately with innumerable bullets in his body. But he was the advance of an irresistible wave.

Behind him came a dozen and behind the dozen arrived the full weight of a battalion, all its members pressing vigorously to the front, firing no shot, but extending the steel blade.

Now the clamor rose toward the heavens. A few irregular shots answered for the provincials, and that was the end of their powder and shot. Swords flashed upward and hoarse voices cried out the gallant names of their dead. Gunstock banged gunstock and strange oaths were sworn. Men fell and were engulfed in the rapidly overflowing area. The pressure of the newly arriving British companies inexorably forced the provincials backwards toward the rear of the redoubt.

Isaac Brent struggled in the crowd to maintain his footing. His heart pumped unusually strong and his temper turned warmer and warmer. The fury of those dogged men around him seemed to pass over and infuse him with a reckless resentment. Directly in front a British bayonet plunged forward and impaled a lad barely beyond the first score years. The attack drove the boy against Brent; he heard the lad sob and saw him slip down, releasing his gun. In one vigorous move Brent had secured that gun and had raised it. He found himself lagging in the retreat. About him were red-coated men, mustached men, all sweating profusely and gaping for the dust-laden air. One such came onward swiftly and presented his bayonet at the doctor.

"Here's a tonic, you cursed rebel!" he panted. "Take it!"

"I need no tonic!" said the doctor.

He parried the thrust and, as the momentum carried the Englishman onward, he reversed and brought up the gun butt with all his strength. He heard the impact of that butt striking flush beneath the other's chin and saw agony spring to the soldier's face. Then he was caught in a milling crowd and jammed tightly against the rear parapet. The sallyport was too small an exit; they leaped over the wall and retreated toward the base of Bunker Hill. Brent never knew how he got over the parapet. He was aware that some time later he, too, was retreating stubbornly, elbow to elbow with others, swearing large epithets and praying for a drink of water.

If the confusion within the redoubt was great, it was still worse in the ground immediately outside. Here the dust, under the converging points of British attack, rose in billows, and the two sides were so mixed that no man could tell friend or foe beyond a few yards. Now and then, on the left, Brent heard the popping of a musket and knew that those stationed along the rail fence were covering the retreat of the redoubt defenders.

"By Godfrey!" he gasped. "We can fight!"

He seemed to be emerging from the area of a storm into comparatively quiet territory. The noise and the dust alike grew fainter as he retreated. He scrambled over a fence, still holding to his musket, and almost automatically joined in a kind of organized body retreating along the road to Charlestown Neck and the mainland. Brent looked behind him as the scene began to clarify. The redoubt was well surrounded by British who were halting and dressing their lines. The provincials at the rail fence, once the redoubt had been cleared, were very slowly giving ground, holding off pursuit. From every direction men and companies converged into the road. The doctor, carried along in the throng, turned his face to the front. The road swung and cut the battlefield from sight.

He lagged wearily, hearing now and then a mumbled word from his neighbors; but for the most part he was a silent part of a silent and sullen crowd. Their heads were down in sheer exhaustion and their steps were shambling. A fresh company from Cambridge came up, heard the news and turned back. In no great time Brent roused himself with an effort and saw that he was with a much smaller group. They had crossed the Neck, and the men were splitting along the various routes to their homes. He too, turned. In a half hour he came to the Lone Oak tavern, found his horse and climbed into the saddle. It was then for the first time that he noted the afternoon gone and evening advancing swiftly. There was a throbbing in his wrist; he looked down to see the blood congealing over his hand.

IT WAS pretty late when he got inside his own house and relaxed before the hearth. The kettle sang on the crane and the table was set for the evening meal. His wife poured water in the wash basin and waited upon him while he went through the motions of straightening his attire. Once at the table she ventured to break the silence.

"I wish you had taken more breakfast. It has made you look peaked."

"A touch of the sun, perhaps," said he. "The hill was hot."

"You were kept busy?"

"Yes. There was enough to do." He forgot the food on his plate and sank into a deep reverie, waking from it with a jerk of his head. "I have been mightily wrong, my dear. I now confess it. I thought this a war of agitators. But when men fight so well and so stubbornly they can not but be sincere. There can not but be stout principles in their minds and courage in their hearts."

"You have changed your opinion, Isaac?"

"I think," said he very slowly, "that I have changed my opinion and my political allegiance." He shook his head, playing with the silverware. "Strange. I don't quite understand it. I went to the hill a Tory doctor and came back a baptized patriot. Somewhere I changed my mind, but to save me I can't tell where."

He drank his tea—or that imitation which passed for tea—and got up, turning toward his surcoat, the very picture of a man who fumbles in his mind for a lost idea.

"I did them an injustice. Ten thousand agitators could not make men fight like that if they had not some just cause."

"Where are you going now?"

"To see Miss Hammersley." He buttoned his coat and, characteristic gesture, struck the wall with his hand. "She must change her doctor. If the provinces are good enough for such men, the provinces are good enough for me. Tomorrow I join the army."

THE ORIGIN OF "HASH MARKS"

by Arthur Woodward

THERE are many of us who remember the G. O. of the War Department which was issued in the late summer or early fall of 1918 relevant to the placing of silver and gold chevrons upon the left sleeve of the uniform and overcoats. There were thousands of discontented grousers who sewed the silver chevrons of the "stay at home" chevrons, one for each six months of service, upon their sleeves and many more thousands of the jubilant "veterans" of France who sewed gold service-stripes upon their arms.

However, I dare say there are few who know of the origin of those stripes, even among the old-timers who have their blouse sleeves covered from shoulder to wrist with the "hash marks."

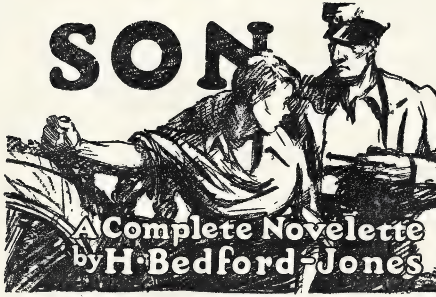
General George Washington himself issued the first order for privates and noncoms. to place service-stripes upon their left sleeves.

In the month of August, the seventh of that month to be exact, in the year 1782, while the Army lay at Newburgh on the Hudson, the following order was issued:

"Honorary badges of distinction are to be conferred on the veteran non-commissioned officers and soldiers of the Army who have served more than three years with bravery, fidelity and good conduct; for this purpose, a narrow piece of white cloth, of an angular form, is to be fixed to the left arm on the uniform coat.

"Non-commissioned officers and soldiers who have served with equal distinction more than six years, are to be distinguished by two pieces of cloth, set on parallel to each other, in a similar form.

"Should any who are not entitled to the honors have the insolence to assume the badges of them, they shall be severely punished. On the other hand, it is expected these gallant men who are thus distinguished will, on all occasions be treated with particular confidence and consideration."



SON

A Complete Novelette

by H. Bedford-Jones

Author of "The White-Tailed Dragon," "Rodomont," etc.

FROM the open window of the radio station the two men looked out to where the schooner was slowly creeping to anchorage. The quarantine launch had just gone aboard. The man in uniform inspected her through his glasses.

"One white man—American or English by his air," he commented. "Two or three Arabs. She is going to anchor off Pasindava village. She needs water, therefore. Looks odd."

"Americans are fools," said the civilian, lighting a cigaret. "I can prove it."

"All?" queried the officer in charge of the radio station.

"The best of them." The civilian, Raoul Delorte, picked up a magazine in brownish covers he had brought with him. "*Violà!* Here is the proof. I have carried it about, to fetch to you. It will amuse you, though you do not read English. Wait."

He fell to ruffling the pages. His brother, Jean Marie Delorte, continued to watch the schooner which had just entered harbor.

This was Hellville, capital of Nosi Bé, center of French authority on the northwest coast of Madagascar. It was a hot day, and days get very hot in Hellville. The town was named after an admiral, but English-speaking visitors have some right to conclude otherwise. The two men in sweat-wilted uniform and whites gave no thought to the beauty of their surroundings, yet this was one of the stupendously beautiful majestic places of the world.

Nosi Bé itself, that island of marvels, was towering into the heavens behind them, with Mount Kumba and the Madagascar mainland hovering above and over in rugged volcanic heights. The hot, jagged peaks of the island, rising in abrupt and serrated masses, vivid green in the afternoon sunlight, gave place here closer at hand to the threefold indented harbor, the town on its promontory between—rather, a cluster of towns, shaded with green mango trees, deep with gardens, restful with broad roads and the gleam of houses.

From the signal station on the western point to the fine white coral mansions of the Hindu town, three miles away, Hellville was strung out in radiating heat. Here were Arabs, brown Hovas, stalwart Sakalava fishermen, Hindu and Chinese traders, sprinkling of uniformed whites. Here Africa met Madagascar, for out to westward lay the wide Mozambique Channel.

Raoul Delorte, grinning, laid the magazine before his brother.

"You do not read English. No matter. This is an American magazine. Fancy a man who is a famous traveler coming here to write about your accursed little island. And what does he write? That Hellville has one street on which the official buildings face. That Nosi Bé itself is one of the Comoro Islands!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Lieutenant Delorte. "Is this a joke, Raoul?"

"No. It is proof that all Americans and English are fools."

"Bah! Show the thing to Colonel Laforet. He reads English, and it will amuse him," said the lieutenant with a shrug. "A good-looking schooner there, eh? I just read her name. These are excellent glasses. She is the *Firefly*. What is that in French, my linguist brother?"

"*Luciole,*" answered Raoul; then suddenly straightened. "Eh? Name of a name! It is impossible! Why, she was in Lourenço Marques when I was there."

The officer turned abruptly, abandoned everything, and sat down to his table as a peremptory call came out of the ether. A sharp ejaculation broke from him. He seized pencil and paper and began to jot down a message, though he had made no acknowledgement of its reception.

Meanwhile Raoul Delorte picked up the glasses and studied the schooner as she was brought toward the watering anchorage. He was not a pretty man, this Raoul Delorte. Agent for a vegetable oil syndicate, he had just arrived here from Portuguese East Africa; his sallow skin showed that he had been out for some time. He was swart and he was thin, with black brows meeting heavily above his nose. His eyes were deep, narrowly set, thoughtful. He was not well built and of no particular bodily strength, but sharp ability lay in his eyes. A good *commerciante*, one would say. Only his thin, high-bridged nose showed facial resemblance to his brother.

That brother was a fine, soldierly type, compactly built, very wide-shouldered and of great physical strength. Mental energy also showed—square-cut chin, alertly eager eyes, strong mouth, all betrayed ability and decision. His mouth was too thin, perhaps. Cruelty lurked there, and unscrupulous cunning dwelt in his gaze. This was suddenly intensified when he removed the headpiece and fell to work with pencil, giving his brother a swift glance.

"Name of a dog! Here is something. Wait until I get it decoded," he said eagerly.

Raoul Delorte gave him a negligent look, laid down the prismatics and frowned slightly as if trying to remember something about that schooner. Then he lighted a fresh cigaret. In another two or three days both of them would be on their way home. That was why he had come here to Nosi Bé to get his brother.

He, himself, had finished his two years, and could now return to a commercial position with the firm, at home in France. The lieutenant was going home on six months' leave, so they had arranged to meet and go home together. They were not brotherly enemies, these two, but got along well, always. Raoul had the more agile brain, perhaps, but Jean Marie made up for lack of imagination by a consummate energy of action, swift grasp of a problem in all essentials, decision. In business together they would have made a superb team.

The officer swung around in suppressed excitement.

"You see that schooner? Listen! The cruiser *Philippeaux* has just sent out a general call to all stations. I have decoded it. The schooner *Firefly* of British registry is to be placed under arrest and held if she comes into any French waters. Her captain is wanted for offenses over there among the Comoros. He has smuggled diamonds aboard, eh? Name of a dog, my brother, are you ill?"

For of a sudden Raoul Delorte had gone ashen white. He put out a hand to steady himself. He dropped his cigaret, licked his lips, lowered himself into a chair.

"I remember!" he exclaimed. "Wait, wait, wait—"

The officer waited, alarmed. After a moment Raoul Delorte fought down his agitation. Craft gleamed in his eyes, then they widened in eager vision.

"This—this is stupendous!" he said thickly. "Regard! I know about those diamonds. I heard all about them at Lourenço. Captain Murray, it is his own boat. It was rumored he must have got away with them, but nobody was certain. This schooner, then, they are aboard her! The Soronho diamonds—a fortune, my brother, a fortune incalculable! Uncut diamonds on that ship!"

"Uncut diamonds!" repeated Lieutenant Delorte slowly, staring at his brother. Into his jet eyes flashed a glow of radiance that was significant. "On that ship—there—"

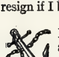
Silence fell upon them as the eyes of the two men met and read one another. An oppressive yet pregnant silence, for between these brethren existed a perfect understanding. The two might have talked for hours, and yet have uttered no more than they here spoke to one another in one swift, tacit exchange of glances. Finally Raoul Delorte, recovering his composure, smiled a little.

"Perhaps you do not understand," he said slowly. "Those Soronho diamonds are not stolen. They were smuggled. Yes, that is no crime! They belong to any one who can bring them to market. This Murray has them now. No doubt of it."

"So much the better," muttered the lieutenant, his eyes avid with greed.

"You, my brother, you have a certain position—"

"Bah!" The officer swept out his hand. "The army is my career. Well, can I not resign if I become wealthy?"



RAOUL DELORTE looked out at the bay, where the schooner was not yet ready to anchor. Sweat ran down into his eyes, and he passed his hand across them. Thoughts were struggling in him, crowding upon each other, a wild rush of swift schemes, plans, ideas. His brother went on speaking musingly.

"Paris, and no return here! Those stones could be quickly, easily disposed of on the curb jewel market. The Russian crown jewels passed that way. It can be done. It is safe."

"Listen!" Raoul Delorte leaned forward, and a pulse was throbbing at his temple. "I see the whole thing. They will be hidden in the cabin, you may be sure! Some hiding place there, a false panel. You have a genius for such things, a nose. She is not yet past quarantine, for there is the officer aboard her now. What was it you were telling me this morning about that officer being ill?"

"Lieutenant de Selz? Yes. He should be in his bed this minute. Why?"

"You—you—ah, if only I could speak as swiftly as the thought comes!" A stifled oath burst from Raoul, his eyes were tortured with wild thought. "Look, Jean. The message there in your hand! The telephone, you comprehend? Use it, get down to the quay, aboard her. That message must be altered. The schooner comes from the Comoros evidently. *Alors*, let the message speak of fever there, bubonic plague, something! There is static and you are not certain of its import, but one must take no chances, is it not? In this climate, especially. Smash your instruments somehow so that no further word can come from that cruiser, and go quickly. Relieve the quarantine officer, and take me with you. Take charge of disinfecting this schooner. Order them to remain on deck."

"*Oui, oui, oui, oui!*" The rapid French affirmative broke from the officer. He leaped to his feet, strode up and down hurriedly. Finally he swung around, with a blaze in his eyes. "I comprehend everything, but regard! The message I may suppress, but the later danger! That man will know, that Murray. He—"

"Leave him to me!" Now Raoul was on his feet, eager. "My share! Introduce me to him, not as your brother, but as Ferraud, Raoul Ferraud, a man of science, a photographer! Leave the rest to me. Know nothing of it. I will attend to it. *Pardieu*, how it all comes to me! It is clear, clear."

"What do you mean?" snapped the officer alertly. "Surely not—"

Passion, greed, wild excitement filled the swarthy features of Raoul Delorte.

"He must be silenced. Leave it to me, all of it!" he exclaimed in a low voice. "I have the plan already formed. There can be no trouble. You will get the stones. All these island schooners have false panels. Leave by the boat which stops tonight, the English boat for Delagoa and Durban. Connect there with a Castle boat for home. The commandant said last night you could leave by that boat if you wished. Well, I remain here. By tomorrow night I shall have finished my work. Friday comes the mail-boat from Diego for Zanzibar. I take it, go home by the Suez Canal, get to Paris ahead of you. Everything is clear behind us. You see? Then speak quickly! There is not a moment to lose. Can you do it? Can you carry off your end safely?"

For a moment there was silence as the officer considered everything. Now he was clear and calm and poised, alert yet repressed. His whole future hung in the balance. If he overlooked one tiniest thing, he was ruined for life.

In this moment the varied character of the two brethren stood forth plainly, unmasked by greed. Here was the officer, stalwart, unscrupulous, cruel, thin lips drawn back from white teeth, a man of unbounded energy and ability. In contrast to him was the other man, dark eyes all ablaze; a man nervous, highly strung, with vision and imagination plus a man capable of tremendous achievement in his sly and crafty way, and anything but a coward despite his slight physique. To say which of these two men would be the more dangerous was a difficult thing.

"I will hold him in talk on deck." Raoul was fairly panting in his fiery eagerness. "It will all go well. You below with your keen nose, burning the smudges, searching! You will exert authority—"

"Be still," ordered the officer curtly, and Raoul obeyed.

Presently the lieutenant sat down and seized his pencil and code-book. He said nothing. He sat there and wrote steadily. When he scraped back his chair and rose, one perceived the decision sitting in his eyes. He put out one hand to the telephone on its oblong bracket and then paused.

"Send that orderly in here," he said calmly. "Then get down to the quay and meet me. I shall attend to everything. The radio will be burned out."

"We do it?" cried Raoul.

"We stake everything," answered his brother steadily, significantly, "upon your ability to silence that man. You may believe that Americans are fools, but I know better."

Raoul Delorte drew a long breath, wiped the sweat from his cheeks. A slow and terrible smile touched his lips.

"By tomorrow night he will be silent. I promise it," he responded, then turned and left the radio station.

II

SOME time before the two men in the radio station descried the schooner, while she was reaching in past the reefs off western approach, a curious thing occurred.

Murray was getting out the red-bordered blue pilot flag when the boy at the wheel spoke to him, calling his attention to a Sakalava fishing-boat bearing down from the northward, evidently bound to Hellville.

"Signal that boat, Cap'n! I'd like to use her."

Murray lifted his head, nodded, broke out another ensign. He flung a word at the three Arabs visible on deck, and they went to the lines. One would observe singular things about this ship and these men.

The schooner herself was unkempt, her lines untended. Her port forward bulwarks were badly smashed. The three Arabs and Murray, owner and skipper, were weary shadows of men, and Murray had the weak pallor of one recovering from illness. Under his haggard look, however, was still the old reckless alertness which had made him the most successful gun-runner along the Somali coast before he came south into these seas.

The boy at the wheel was weary also, but showed it less. He was a brown-faced little waif, Carvahal by name, whom Murray had picked up at Grand Comoro. To be more exact, he had picked up Murray, had fastened to him like a leech with a tale of hidden gold. Murray was a quiet man, always cool and poised, master of himself and everything around, but the boy rather reached into him, swept him off his feet. He had no use for the gold, having the Soronho diamonds stowed away below, but Carvahal won him over. Now, with three sound men and one wounded Arab for crew, they had the fifty thousand francs aboard, likewise stowed away.

"Our gold," Murray had said, "and our diamonds," for the boy knew of the stones. "Not yours or mine, son. Ours." And Carvahal had nodded to that in his bird-like fashion. He was old beyond his years, this boy, brought up on the islands, supposedly a wastrel of mixed blood; but Murray knew better. Murray knew who the boy was, knew his parentage, knew that he was not only white, but of good blood. And Murray, who was a silent man, said nothing.

"Boat's standing in to meet our course," he observed, coming to the boy at the helm. The schooner lost way as her wings fluttered. "Now, then, what d'you want of her?"

"This," said Carvahal, lighting a cigaret.

His age was indefinite; he was used to oaths. He was no angel, this boy! He had seen prisons from the inside, and his knife had drunk the blood of men; to his lips came French, Swahili or Malagasy with equal fluency, not to mention English and a smattering of Hindustani picked up from the Hindu merchants, who were all his friends.

"What is this?" demanded Murray, laughingly.

"Our fifty thousand francs." The boy looked at him soberly. "We do not know what is ahead of us. We are forced to put in here to get water and men. Whether the authorities may seek to arrest us, whether any order of seizure is out against us, we can not tell. The French may be looking for you. However, it is imperative that we put in here."

"Conceded," said Murray, lighting a cigaret for himself and eyeing the converging native boat. He treated this boy as a man—and well he might—and there was affection between them. "I'm not greatly worried. If they grab us, we'll slip out of their hands somehow. If not, we'll be gone in two days."

"It takes time to pick good men," said Carvahal sagely. "Now at Hellville is a merchant named Ram Das. He is a brother to Lal Das in Grand Comoro, a good friend of mine. We can trust this Ram Das."

"Conceded," said Murray. "Fire ahead. Time's getting short."

"We have stowed that fifty thousand francs of ours into a suitcase," went on the boy. "If we get into trouble, we shall need ready money, but shall have no means of getting it ashore. It is gold, and will be seized by the authorities. No one is supposed to have gold Napoleons these days. Thus, if we find ourselves in hot water, the gold must remain in your secret place below. If we do not get into trouble, we shall have the same difficulty getting it ashore."

"Conceded—in part," said Murray. "But this boat?"

"Will take me ashore into port. No one will pay any attention to a fishing-boat, which will probably not land at the main harbor at all. There are three harbors in Hellville, you know. I will go direct to Ram Das with the gold. He will be glad to have it, and will give me either a much larger sum in French paper—a twenty-franc Napoleon is worth eighty francs or more—or else an order on the Hindu bankers in Zanzibar for a like sum."

Murray whistled reflectively. He had forgotten about the rise in gold values in considering the boy's treasure-trove. This fifty thousand francs in Napoleons was now worth two hundred thousand francs in Banque de France notes and would be worth more than this amount to any dealer in illicit currency.

"You can do it if you like," said Murray thoughtfully. "But you're running risks. You've no papers. We had figured on passing you as my son, you know. If the French pick you up and ask for your papers, you'll be in the soup."

"Ram Das will fix that," said the boy confidently. "He can outfit me with papers to suit the occasion."

Murray shrugged.

"You're no fool, and can take care of yourself. After all, the gold is yours, son. There's merit in your scheme, and if there's danger in it as well, we can't help that. All life's danger. Go get the suitcase. You know how to work the sliding panel."

"No, you get it," returned the boy calmly, looking at the boat. "Let me do the talking with those fishermen. They are Sakalavas, and I know a good bit of their language. If you have any loose money, give me a hundred francs to buy the passage with."

Murray nodded, called Ibrahim to the wheel and went below.

Old Ibrahim, gaunt rover of Hadramaut, gun-runner and pirate and more or less hero of a hundred affrays, looked over the spokes at the boy with affection. He and Carvahal wasted no compliments on each other. Ibrahim loved Murray, and he vastly admired this waif of the seas whom he believed to be Murray's son. Carvahal hailed the boat, which was now almost alongside, and the grinning brown natives caught the line he flung them.

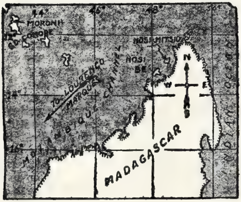
"What now, imp of ——?" quoth the old Arab, fingering his gray beard. "Is thy father's son going to make a deal in fish?"

"Aye," retorted the boy, "for thy father's wife, since swine love to eat fish! Hold thy rattling tongue, ancient afrit of evil, and let thy betters speak."

A squat, nearly naked Sakalava came up the rope and over the rail, and Carvahal spoke with him. Murray appeared with some franc notes, and at sight of the money the fisherman called down to his two companions. Their conference was short. Five minutes afterward Carvahal shook hands with Murray and slid down into the boat. The suitcase was lowered to him. The brown canvas and the white canvas was drawn taut and the fishing craft headed in across the shallows for Hellville, while the schooner, her pilot flag out, kept to her course.

Murray cautioned his men to say nothing about the boy, and knew they would obey.

So the *Firefly* tacked in toward the sheer green mountains, and by the time the pilot came aboard, the fishing-boat was lost among a swarm of other such craft. Murray had no more time to spend on worrying over Carvahal's luck, for he had troubles enough of his own, and no lack of them. He had to explain why there remained to him only three sound men and one with a bullet-smashed shoulder and no mate at all, not to mention the condition of the bulwarks forward, and other things.



Fortunately, his papers were all clear and aboveboard. What was more to the point, Captain Murray knew how to explain things difficult to explain. If he contravened the law, he did so less from cupidity than from love of the game. There was nothing about him petty or mean. From his eyes shone a clear, quiet courage that gained the liking of other men at once and, if he had to lie, he did it with a will.

The quarantine officer came aboard—a fever-shaken man, racked with pain—as they were drawing in toward their anchorage. Murray planned to water ship before night and then haul around into the more convenient anchorage in Plateau Cove. The officer departed in his launch, and they were clear of pratique and managed to get the anchor down. Murray was bargaining with some boatmen to take him ashore, when there was a scattering of the native craft, and the quarantine launch chugged in again to the ladder, this time with a different officer aboard. The latter mounted and saluted Murray curtly, two gendarmes coming after him, followed by a civilian.

"DO YOU speak French, Captain Murray?"

"Perfectly," said Murray.

"I am Lieutenant Delorte. Poor De Selz is rotten with fever, and I have relieved him temporarily. I regret to inform you that we have just received word of a bubonic outbreak at Grand Comoro. I shall have to give your ship a thorough fumigation before allowing any communication with the shore. I understand you've had trouble. One of our sudden hurricanes."

"Coming across, yes," said Murray wearily. "Smashed into a dhow, too. We're about done up, I can tell you."

"My dear captain, give yourself no trouble whatever, I beg of you!" said the officer. "I have the smudges, and my men are competent. If you'll be good enough to retire under your after awning, I'll do everything that's necessary. The fumes will harm nothing, I assure you."

"Very well," said Murray.

He gave the man a curious look. Delorte had not the languid air of most Frenchmen in these seas. He was alive with energy, almost with excitement, thought Murray. A dark, alert officer, unwontedly capable. Since the formalities must be complied with, the man might as well do it and be satisfied. Any protest might be dangerous.

The civilian approached, and Delorte turned to him.

"Captain Murray, may I introduce to you a gentleman of science, also a keen photographer, M. Raoul Ferraud? He desires to speak with you. Why, I cannot say. I've brought you out a basket of our fresh fruit, too. I think it will be welcome."

Murray shook hands with Ferraud, a thin, swarthy figure. Delorte spoke to his stalwart brown Hovas, two more of them came aboard bearing boxes of smudges and all moved aft. Murray was too worn out himself to bother about anything below decks. The only thing he had to hide was the little sack of diamonds, and that reposed securely behind the secret panel in the cabin, quite safe.

Ferraud accompanied him aft, and Ibrahim brought them the basket of fruit. The two white men settled down. Murray lighted a cigaret and gazed at the far-spread town with unconcealed relaxation. He nodded in response to a query from Ferraud.

"Yes, I've had a touch of fever, and its rather knocked me out. The quarantine officer has given me a prescription to pull me around."

Inwardly Murray was pondering a problem. He had to get men and, as Carvahal had wisely said, it took time to get good men. Every minute he spent here in this French port held peril for him. He wanted to drop his wounded Arab here for hospital treatment, too. Lying here in harbor over a day or two was not at all to his taste, but there seemed no help for it.

The slender civilian, on his side, was faced by no less a problem—that raised by his new identity. If Murray went ashore and mentioned a scientist named Farraud, there would certainly be wonder. White men were too few here for such a thing to pass unnoticed, and men would ask why Raoul Delorte had been introduced under another name and guise by Lieutenant Jean Marie Delorte. However, that must be chanced, and he could handle it—with luck.

"I have sought you out," he said quietly to Murray, "with an object in view which you may think impudent, but I beg your consideration. I, at first, intended to offer you money. Now I still offer whatever payment you may ask, but that is secondary, since I found that you are a gentleman."

Now that he was at work and facing emergency, Delorte was entirely self-possessed, and had lost all his febrile nervousness. Murray focussed his attention on the visitor. He did not entirely like the man, but then he seldom did like Frenchmen in any case; besides, this compliment was gracefully put. The Delortes were well born. Murray recognized that he was dealing with a cultured man, and nodded.

"Thank you," he said quietly. "And your object, M. Ferraud?"

"I am leaving here Friday on the boat for Zanzibar," said the other. "My time is short, and one object of my visit here is still unattained. Twenty-five miles north of here, and lying fifteen miles off the mainland coast, yonder," Ferraud, as he now was, waved a hand toward the blue summits of Madagascar—"there is a cluster of islands, the largest of which is called Nosi Mitsio. Do you know of it?"

"No," said Murray.

"It is a natural wonder." Ferraud's sallow cheeks kindled a little. He played his part very well indeed. "These islands are formed of tremendous basaltic columns, some straight and some curved, to a height of eighteen meters or more. These columns are six-sided, innumerable, extremely interesting. The place is seldom visited, and few white men have ever seen this marvel of nature. One of my great ambitions is to visit it and make photographs of the spot. Unfortunately, until you came, I found this an impossibility. There are no native schooners or dhows here at the present moment, and none may come until after I leave. The fishing craft are small, and give me no secure level for my camera, nor do they afford any height above the water."

Murray got the drift of it now, and he smiled a little at the scientist's eagerness.

"My dear chap," he said, "you want me to run up there? It's out of the question, I'm sorry to say. I have only three men left of my crew. We are all of us utterly worn out with work and illness. Nor do I know these waters, and to coast up north of here would take a good pilot. I'm not up to the effort, that's all."

Even as he spoke, however, he could have regretted the necessity of refusing the man. Here was his chance to get away for a day or so, had he been able to take it, and return to find men awaiting him, with a quick getaway and a haul up for Mombasa or Zanzibar. However, the thing was out of the question.

"I realize your difficulty, since hearing of your troubles," returned Ferraud suavely. "I have been thinking things over in my mind. Please, my dear captain," he added earnestly, "do not regard me as urging you against your wishes, but may I say what is in my thought?"

"By all means," said Murray, rather well impressed by the man's politeness and excellent French.

He still did not fancy the man, yet he was too cautious to overlook possible bets.

"Well, it is this." Ferraud reflectively studied his cigaret. His eyes were slow to meet the incisive regard of Murray. "I am perfectly willing to spend money if I can attain this object, you understand. Local pilots are not hard to find and good native seamen are here in plenty. Besides, you comprehend, I am not unknown to the authorities here, and have a little influence."

Ferraud swallowed hard as he went on, but the approval in Murray's face heartened him. Since he was running the risk, he might as well plunge.

"Suppose you were kind enough to assent, what would I do?" he pursued. "I would have a dozen men aboard here before sunrise, so that with the morning wind we might be on our way. I would have a pilot aboard who knows every foot of the reefs to the north of here. You might set your weary men ashore and leave them, if you so desire, or remain yourself. What I most need is the boat, though I assure you that since our meeting it would be most gratifying to have the pleasure of your company. With such an early start we should be able to reach Nosi Mitsio in good time, take our pictures during the usual noonday calm and then return with the afternoon wind, getting here by sunset or before."

"This," he added apologetically, "is only as the affair presents itself to me. I do not wish to urge you unduly. If you will consider the matter, I can make all arrangements this afternoon. You will have no trouble whatever."

Murray smoked thoughtfully in the silence that followed. Under any ordinary circumstances such an appeal would have left him quite cold, especially from a man whom he did not at all fancy on closer scrutiny. But the circumstances were extraordinary. Even now he felt ill at ease in this French port. If any breath had blown here from Lourenço Marquez in regard to the Soronho diamonds, it might bring disaster in its train.

There was something almost providential about this Frenchman's proposition therefore. Thinking it over, Murray reflected on how he could put his wounded man in hospital and could set his two other Arabs ashore to seek Carvahal, keeping Ibrahim with him. Those Arabs were good men, not of the African breed, but men of Hadramaut, in the north. They would do better than Carvahal when it came to picking up trustworthy men of their own race.

Provided he could get water today, then, there was nothing much against it. All the more if Ferraud's official influence could give him a lift out.

"Hm! We'd get back tomorrow afternoon, then," he said thoughtfully. "In that case, I'd like very much to be off and out with the night wind tomorrow night, but as that would be after sunset, it's against the rules. I couldn't get clearance. Provided these Arabs of mine can pick up some men tomorrow and have them ready to jump aboard, do you suppose you could arrange things for me with the harbor master?"

Ferraud tried hard to keep the exultation out of his eyes.

"Beyond a question," he rejoined. "In fact, it is due to my pleading that you are not being given any quarantine trouble beyond a mere fumigation! If you'll do me the favor—"

"All right." Murray jerked his head. "We'll take the trip, M. Ferraud."

Ferraud shook hands with him, so bubbling over with delight that Murray grimly thought those photographs must mean a good deal to the man.

Then they fell to discussing arrangements. A pilot and six men, thought Murray, would be ample to handle the schooner, especially as he would have Ibrahim aboard. To this Ferraud at once agreed. Murray put a price on the schooner, chiefly out of curiosity, and Ferraud at once produced three thousand francs in purple notes. Evidently money was of no great moment to him in this matter.

It was, indeed, of much less moment than Murray realized.

So much was Murray taken up with the eagerness of his visitor and the questions of detail poured in upon him that he did not note how time passed. It had just occurred to him that he had seen nothing of the quarantine man when the powerful figure of Lieutenant Delorte emerged from the after-companionway and came to them.

"Everything in shape, Captain Murray," said the officer with a salute. "It's not safe to go below for an hour. After that, open up the cabins, and you may occupy them tonight."

"I suppose," said Ferraud, "you'll not object to Captain Murray going ashore now?"

"Very well, since you ask it, Ferraud. You are clear, my dear captain."

This little sample of Ferraud's influence was conclusive. Murray considered that he had made a very lucky landfall.

III

MURRAY could well leave the business of watering, getting fresh stores and other details to Ibrahim. He took the big, gaunt Arab into the galley, unstrapped the belt that held most of his worldly wealth, though not the diamonds, and counted out some franc notes to cover expenses. Lieutenant Delorte had already offered to take him around to the quay with the wounded Arab, so five minutes later they were on their way.

When they had climbed the moss-covered steps, Ferraud summoned a number of *mono-pousse* boys with the singular Madagascar vehicles, not unlike a wheelbarrow in general appearance, then excused himself and disappeared. Murray, the Arab and Delorte got placed in the vehicles, and were rapidly wheeled along the wide and pleasant roads to the government hospital. Here, at a word from Delorte, all was made smooth sailing. Murray left a sum of money to pay for the man's treatment and gave him sufficient to take him home to Hadramaut later. Then he shook hands with Delorte, thanking the officer for his interest, and so they parted. Had Murray known what caused the bulge in the side pocket of Delorte's uniform jacket, the parting would have differed; so would Murray's gratitude.

By this time it was nearly sunset. As Murray was wheeled toward the Hindu town with its shady streets and fine white mansions he saw a small steamer entering the harbor. This was the English line boat which would go on that same night to Delagoa and Durban. Murray had no suspicion that the appearance of this steamer was vitally bound up with his own destiny.

He was landed finally at the house of Ram Das, the merchant—a fine house, newly built, heavily adorned with carved woodwork brought from Bombay. As Murray had expected, he found the Hindu returned from his office and, on giving his name, was received with deep salaam.

"Will the sahib enter my poor house?" said Dam Ras. "Sahib Carvahal is already with me."

Murray nodded, and two minutes later gripped hands with the boy, who was flushed and eager-eyed.

"I told you Ram Das would take care of us!" exclaimed Carvahal, while the merchant smiled. "We've gone over the money, and there's even a little more than we thought, all good pieces."

Murray seated himself and lighted a cigaret, and the Hindu referred to a paper.

"The amount at bank rates, sahib, comes to two hundred and five thousand francs. You might obtain a trifle more than this from one who melts gold, but I dare not take chances with the law. It is very strict in this respect. If I buy the gold, it is to keep or to make use of from time to time where the metal is of advantage—"

"I'm quite satisfied if you are, son," said Murray, smiling. "You finish your own business with Sahib Das! Then my turn will come."

"Good." Carvahal turned to the merchant. "Now, then, about payment! How will that suit you, Ram Das?"

"How you will, sahib. I can give you part cash, perhaps, and the remainder in bills upon Jelalee Jhind & Co., who have branches everywhere."

"Then give me fifty thousand francs in notes," said the boy, "and the remainder in bills on their Zanzibar house."

The merchant assented. Then Murray intervened.

"One moment. Let the settlement wait until tomorrow. Ram Das, will you take care of this, my son until tomorrow night? He does not wish to be seen. Also, I shall send you two Arabs early in the morning."

The Hindu nodded. Carvahal watched Murray inquiringly.

"Why, Cap'n?"

"I'm taking a little trip tomorrow. I want you, son, to pick up half a dozen men and have them ready to hop aboard tomorrow night at sunset. I'm arranging to leave here then. You and the Arabs and Ram Das among you can find good men, Arabs preferably. I'm taking a French scientist a few miles north to photograph some geologic formations. This will take me out of the harbor and prevent too much speculation in general about us."

The Hindu assented quietly to Murray's proposal, but Carvahal was curious about the trip. He demanded more information. Murray smiled.

"He is a M. Ferraud, my son, and wants to photograph a place called Nosi Mitsio, north of here. You know the place, Ram Das?"

"I know it, sahib, though I do not know such a man. It is a curious place, in truth, and well worth a visit. If you will excuse me, I shall offer you some sherbet."

The merchant departed, shrewdly enough. Carvahal turned to Murray.

"What are your plans, tell me! You are

rich and so am I. You'll not go back to running guns?"

Murray regarded the boy for a moment, hesitating, and felt the demon of doubt tearing at him. Should he tell Carvahal or not? No, not now; later, perhaps. If the boy knew what his real name was and what was his rightful heritage there might be danger in it. His deep affection for Carvahal prompted Murray to silence. First he must get the boy to Europe, get him started in the groundwork of an education. The temptation to keep silent always was not a light one, yet at the back of his mind Murray knew that he could never do this.

"Perhaps I'm not as rich as you think, son," he returned slowly. "Why, no, I'm not going back into the game just now. We'll lay up the schooner or sell her. Most of my money is bound up in her, you know. She's a costly thing."

"But the diamonds?" questioned Carvahal.

"Leave them out of it for the present. I'd say that we might leave the craft at Zanzibar and take the first steamer north from there. Go first to London, or rather, to Amsterdam and there get rid of the stones. Then we'll settle you down with your money."

"Our money," corrected the boy. "Half is yours."

Murray offered no protest to this as yet.

"I'll give you a year," he said, "and stick with you that length of time if you'll agree to work. Then, if you can't stand the routine any longer, we can chuck school and everything, and make other plans."

"You mean," and Carvahal's eyes widened, "that you'll stay with me always?"

Murray nodded.

"If you want it so, son. How about it? Do you feel like taking on an adopted father?"

The boy gulped suddenly. For a moment he sat as if paralyzed, then he was at Murray's side, impulsively embracing him in the French fashion, hugging him with astonishing strength. Murray felt the touch of tears on the boy's cheeks.

"This is more than I had hoped," said the boy, now for a moment wholly a boy in his joy and exultation. "Oh, I'm glad! I can't tell you. Well, never mind. What I started to ask was this: Why couldn't we leave the schooner here? The Messageries boat comes Friday night on the way to Zanzibar. We could take her and save time and possible danger."

Murray sat motionless. He perceived instantly that this scheme swept away all his troubles. Odd that he had never thought of it! That was because he had been too long wedded to his schooner, had come to consider her too much an integral part of his cosmos. The thought of parting with her now in a day or so gave him a wrench. Steamers were so few and far between in these seas; a month at best; that such a plan as Carvahal proposed had never occurred to him, wrapped up as he was in other considerations and worries. Now it solved everything. He could turn over the schooner to the Hindu, get away on the Friday night boat, leave all the old life behind him here with the *Firefly*.

"Good," he said, as Ram Das came into the room. "Sahib, can you sell my schooner for me? I think we'll take the Messageries boat to Zanzibar."

The Hindu considered and assented. So it was arranged.

Later Murray returned to the schooner. Ram Das made no difficulty in getting the boy a set of identity papers, for with money all things can be done in French territory. This would be the easier, as Murray proposed to visit the consul and settle the adoption at once.

All was well with the schooner, Ibrahim had everything in shape, and although there was still a lingering pungent odor below decks from the fumigation, this did not worry the skipper in the least; he curled up on a mattress under the after awning and was asleep in two minutes.

Sunrise brought swift activity. Ferraud came alongside in a large native boat, and with him six of the choicest scoundrels Murray had ever laid eyes on. All were Sakalavas, sullen-eyed, fierce men, little removed from primal savagery, and a pilot who was no better. Quite a little luggage was in the native boat, but Ferraud did not send it aboard.

"It is my photographic apparatus, except this camera," and he showed a large valise, almost a trunk in size, which he had brought with him. "Let us leave the stuff down there, as I'd like to take that boat in tow. I may have to use her to get in among the reefs, closer to shore than we can go in this schooner. Do you agree?"

"Just as you like," said Murray carelessly. "It will affect our speed a trifle, but the distance is short. I can't say I admire your native seamen."

Ferraud did not admire them himself. All seven were men who had records, who had been jailed at one time or another; three were outcast from their own people for degrading crimes. Ferraud had picked those men well. He expected to pay them well, for they knew exactly what was to be done. Neither they nor Ferraud had any expectation of being seen again at Hellville in a hurry.

The present task finished, Ferraud would go on with them in the native boat and make Diego Suarez, just the other side of Cape Amber, on the following day, Thursday. Here he would pick up the Messageries boat on Friday. When she came to Hellville that night, he would keep out of sight. Everything was safe for him, and there would be no awkward questions. Once he got well away, he could snap his fingers at suspicions.

"They are good seamen," said Ferraud, looking at the seven squat brown men. "Are your Arabs going ashore?"

"Two only. Ibrahim will remain. He'll do the cooking for us today. It's not his regular job, but he's an excellent chef."

So much the worse for Ibrahim, thought Ferraud.

The two Arabs went ashore to seek Ram Das. The pilot took charge, the six Sakalavas got in the anchor and sent up the canvas and the *Firefly* started out with the morning breeze now coming up from the southeast.

Ferraud had brought aboard plenty of fresh fruit. The two white men sat beneath the after awning, watched the shores slip past until they were beyond the signal station and turning to the north and breakfasted enjoyably. Murray found it good to relax, let others do the work and take comfort in life. Ibrahim's coffee was a marvel, made in all the intricate Arab fashion, fresh crushed from fine Yemen berries. The world had become easy, pleasant, and all cares and troubles were past.

True, Murray did not like the look of those brown men. He did not like the way they regarded him, the way their eyes followed Ibrahim. Had he been tensed up to meet any peril, had there been the least danger anywhere around, he would have been suspicious; but there was none. All that was gone for good.

So he sat chatting with Ferraud, who knew the Mozambique channel and all the ports from Rodriguez to Durban, and enjoyed his cigaret, and discovered that the pilot knew his business. His last cruise aboard the schooner! Hard to believe, this. No matter. There were great things ahead, waiting for him and the boy, this son he had picked up out of the wide world!

So thought Murray.

IV

THIS breakfast finished otherwise than it began, for Murray's ease of mind was abruptly put to flight. Abruptly came a spatter of oaths forward. Ibrahim and one of the men had knives out, hurling curses. Ferraud leaped up the deck and intervened roughly. Murray followed, discovered it was all over nothing and sent Ibrahim to his galley.

The two returned to their chairs. Now Murray was disturbed, however, and he watched the men more closely, frowning. Ferraud, watching him, noted all this, noted the alert eyes, the probing glances, and became thoughtful. Murray was suddenly suspicious, a bad sign. His suspicion and his uneasy thoughts must be turned elsewhere. Ferraud knew how to do it, but it was risky. However, he believed himself to be a diplomat.

Their pilot took them by way of the eastern channel and the inshore passage. To port rose the five towering volcanic peaks and the lesser summits of Nosi Bé. To starboard piled up the looming masses of the Madagascar mountains, heavy and red; the scarlet conical buoy of Tafondro Point dropped behind, and they hauled up for the north where the jagged peaks of Nosi Mitsio broke blue against the horizon.

Ferraud had made up his mind. Now he leaned forward, touched Murray's knee and dropped his voice.

"Something I must tell you," he said quietly. "It has to do with your affairs, which I do not know, and I ask your pardon. You remember Delorte, the officer who came aboard with me yesterday? He was due for home leave, and last night he caught the boat for Durban. You comprehend?

Otherwise, he might never have passed the word to me."

"Eh?" Murray caught a hidden implication, a dark significance in the voice and manner of the Frenchman, whose dark eyes met his very steadily.

"Something has gone wrong at the radio station. Burned out. It will not be in shape again for some days. Delorte, an expert at such matters, worked over the instrument last night until the last moment. He got a message, very much mangled, but afterward there came another short-circuit and the apparatus was worse off than ever, wholly useless."

"Yes?" Murray was on the alert now, his thoughts shifted.

"Delorte conceived a liking for you yesterday and, as I say, my influence is for you. *Voilà!* The explanation." Ferraud puffed at his cigaret. "This mangled message had something to do with you. Delorte could not make it out, so he simply suppressed it. He thought it came from the cruiser *Philippeaux,* now near the naval base at the Comoro group. The name of your schooner was mentioned. Of course, monsieur, we know nothing at all about it, or even the purport of the message. It may be, however, that you know or can guess. One good turn deserves another, and you have gone out of your way to help me. *C'est tout.*"

Ferraud leaned back, waved his hand and gestured finality.

Murray at once perceived the French must be after him. Except for the lucky smash of the radio station at Hellville, he would undoubtedly have found himself under arrest at this moment.

Gratitude toward Ferraud leaped sharply in him, overpowering all his lurking dislike of the swarthy man. It seemed to him that this message had been delivered with great delicacy, no questions being asked. The French can do things in such a manner.

"Thank you, M. Ferraud," he said quietly but earnestly. "I am under great obligation to you and Lieutenant Delorte. It is something to meet with disinterested friendliness in this world, I can tell you!"

When one is planning to kill a man, gratitude from that man is awkward. Ferraud flushed and stammered uneasily. This made Murray think the better of him.

The schooner was heeled sharply over, tearing northward with a bone in her teeth, the native boat behind towing very well. As time passed, Murray began to have some doubts about their ability to make Nosi Mitsio and return to Hellville before sunset. As a matter of fact, it was an impossibility under the circumstances, but he was not acquainted with these waters. He concluded that it would be a good idea to go down and get out his charts and examine things for himself. Then, too, if he was abandoning the schooner at once, there were papers to be destroyed, things to be arranged. He had best do it without delay.

"I'm going below for a bit. Work to do," he said, and rose. "If you want anything, sing out to Ibrahim."

Ferraud nodded.

Murray went down to his cabin. He was uneasy, disturbed by the news Ferraud had just imparted to him. The charts became secondary in importance, and the need of house-cleaning grew more clear. When he got back to Hellville that night, he might have to skip in a hurry. Too late, he wished now that he had caught the steamer which had pulled out during the night. If he had only known!

There was clean water in his cabin. Murray bathed, after a fashion, and changed into fresh whites. Meantime his thoughts were busy with what must be done. He was wiping out all his past life, facing ahead to a fresh, clear start with the son he had found. Therefore he had best destroy everything.

He lighted a cigaret and passed into the saloon cabin. He had scarce been down here since the previous morning, when he had broken out Carvahal's fifty thousand francs. The secret place was a long, narrow space made in the bulkhead, large enough to contain a few rifles, a great deal of well-stacked ammunition or other things. The release spring was set just above the sliding panel. Mechanically, Murray went to it and pressed it with his thumb. Nothing happened. The spring refused to work.

He stood staring. There at one side of the panel was an indication of splintered wood rubbed over with dust and dirt, nearly hidden; but his eye caught it. Startled, Murray tried the spring again, realized that it did not work. Then, examining the edge of the panel, he saw that it was all splintered. He drove his fist against it, and it gave. He drew back, a wild surge of alarm springing in him, and smashed in a sturdier blow. The weakened wood crashed away.

He saw now that it had been pried loose, splintered, smashed out, cleverly set back in place.

Seizing the broken fragments, he drew them away and stared into the recess. His big tin box of papers was there, but the little leathern bag hanging on the hook was gone. The rifles and pistols were there. What mattered now? The Soronho diamonds were gone.

With an effort, Murray collected himself, forced himself down to cold reason. His cigaret had gone out; he realized it, went to a chair, sat down and braced himself against the cant of the deck, brought himself down to cool reflection. Somebody had smashed through that panel and had taken the diamonds.

"It always did ring a trifle hollow," observed Murray aloud, and the sound of his own voice steadied him. "Who could have known they were there? Who was down here?"

No use asking Ibrahim if any one had been down the previous evening. The Arab would not let a soul below. He had been too well trained by Murray. That the other two Arabs had done the work was out of the question. Carvahal would not have needed to smash the panel, being trusted with the secret. Murray nodded.

"Delorte."

There was the man, the thief! He had walked down here the previous afternoon, found the secret panel, pried into it and had walked off with the loot. All the while he had been ashore with Murray, he carried the Soronho diamonds in his pocket; Murray could even remember now the bulge in the pocket of his trim tunic. Yet, where had the man learned about those diamonds?

The answer came in the information Ferraud had imparted, the message Delorte must have left ironically, tongue in cheek, to throw off pursuit! Delorte had gone by the steamer and had left that word to send Murray scurrying away to safety. Delorte must have picked up some general alarm regarding Murray, some word about the diamonds. Fools that the French were to mix in with this affair which was none of their business! But then, the Portuguese might have something to do with it. No telling.

"Delorte probably got that message and left word of it for me so that I'd skip out and not trail him. But how the —— can I trail him in any case?" thought Murray in sudden dismay as he came to full realization of the dilemma facing him. Consternation slowly beat in upon him.

DELORTE had taken that steamer for Durban, and might not connect there for Marseilles or England. Murray could not possibly follow and catch him; his quickest and best plan would be to get the Friday Messageries boat for Zanzibar. Going that way, he could reach France ahead of Delorte. He might pick up the man in Paris, since Delorte was an officer going home on leave, but his chances of picking up the diamonds would be negligible. He could not prove that Delorte had them. The thing was hopeless.

What about this Ferraud, then. Could the man be an accomplice? Murray sat erect at the suggestion, but relaxed again. No, it was not at all credible. Delorte had simply made use of Ferraud, and very cleverly too. If Ferraud had been in on the game, he would have gone with Delorte. His remaining here was proof conclusive that he was innocent.

"I'm hit, and there's no use whining," said Murray quietly. He got out of his chair and took his tin box of papers from the secret compartment. From the box he took half a dozen papers of prime value, and the others he tore across and flung from the open port-hole. He loaded an automatic and put it into his pocket, and then went on deck. Everything was clear now. He would chase those diamonds to Paris, he resolved grimly, but for the moment there was no rush. He had until Friday to wait.

Time had passed during all this while, more time than he had realized. When he came on deck, the schooner was lazily heading up for the Nosi Mitsio reefs, a quarter-mile distant. The usual noonday calm was falling; the *varatraza* or sea wind would not spring up until about one o'clock. As Murray stepped on deck, Ibrahim came toward him from the galley and made an imperceptible sigh. Murray waited.

"Rais, there is something wrong," said the Arab. "By Allah, I do not like the way these men look at me!"

"Go down and get an automatic from the secret place," said Murray quietly. "I have been robbed, and the panel has been smashed open. Go at once."

Suspicion leaped and darted in his brain. After this he suspected everything and every one. He saw Ferraud coming toward him as he walked aft. Ibrahim had gone below hurriedly. Four of the brown Sakalavas were crossing the deck toward him.

Of a sudden Murray found danger all around, read danger in the look of Ferraud, sensed danger in the approaching brown men. Oddly enough, not a word was spoken. He realized that he was alone with Ibrahim on this schooner, eight strangers with them; the odds were hopeless. Murray put his hand to his pocket, and Ferraud's voice leaped at him.

"Up, put them up, Murray!"

No doubt about it now. Swift as light, it had broken. A pistol leaped out in the hand of Ferraud. Murray did not hesitate, but snapped hand to pocket, fired without taking out his weapon. Ferraud whirled around, dropped his weapon, staggered with the shock of it, and his arm fell limp. He was winged.

Murray whirled. Two Sakalavas were leaping at him, steel flashing in the hot sunlight. He had his pistol out now, and fired twice. The second man plunged down at his very feet, rolled against him, sent him staggering against the rail. Another brown man had swooped on Ferraud's fallen pistol; Murray fired at him, missed completely.

Something flashed in air—too late! A thud, a shock, and the knife was driven home. Murray leaned back against the rail, deliberately shot the man who had flung that knife, felt the throbbing madness of the steel planted in his left shoulder. From the corner of his eye he saw a commotion about the ladder, heard a shot, heard the voice of Ibrahim howling out curses, had no more time to look.

Another man was leaping at him. Murray fired, but the shot missed. He fired again, and hit. Then, from the side, came another report, and a groan broke from Murray as he staggered. The brown man with the pistol, Ferraud's pistol—

His right leg gave way, and Murray crumpled. He held to the rail, dragged himself up, but everything was going black. Across the deck came Ibrahim, charging madly to his side, and then, horribly, lost balance and pitched headlong into the scuppers, and lay quiet. Another shot from the Sakalava with the pistol. Murray tried to clear his eyes and drop the man, but missed. The Sakalava grinned, and fired point-blank. Murray pitched over sidewise and fell half across the body of Ibrahim, a trickle of scarlet running down across temple and face.

Ferraud tore off his coat, examined his arm, found the bone unbroken and tied up the flesh-wound with his kerchief. Then he took stock of things. Murray had shot three of the brown men, Ibrahim another; three remained unhurt, including the pilot. A gleam of satisfaction shot into Ferraud's eyes as he took back his pistol from the Sakalava who had used it.

"Good," he said. "Get into the boat and wait for me."

He put one hand to the rail and knelt above Murray's limp body, searching it. He found the money-belt and removed it with a grunt. Then he rose to his feet and glanced around.

"Hm!" he mused aloud. "Not badly done after all. We'll make that mail-boat at Diego, and no sail in sight here. A fishing boat to the south,"and his glance swept the horizon of reefs and mountains and sea, "but she'll get here too late. Can't find out anything even if she heads for the smoke."

He went to the rail and called to the pilot in the native boat alongside.

"Do you need any charts to reach Diego?"

"None," came the response.

"I'll be with you in a moment."

Ferraud went below. In three minutes he leaped on deck and slid into the native craft.

"Oars!" he exclaimed. "We must row."

There were two long sweeps to the boat. The four men, brown and white, caught hold and sent the craft swirling out across the calm waters. Presently the breeze revived for a little space. They drew in the sweeps, hoisted the sail and, ere the breeze died again, were out of sight around the point of Nosi Mitsio. As the schooner was cut off from their vision, a grunt of satisfaction rose from the brown men, and Ferraud looked back, smiling. From the schooner's companionway was ascending a thin trickle of smoke.

From the water Ferraud and those with him could not see the schooner's deck.

On that deck, as the native craft drew away and out of sight around the point of land, Ibrahim sat up, pressing one hand against his side where blood spurted. He looked around, saw the trickle of smoke aft, tried to get on his feet. After two efforts he managed it. Then he realized the hopelessness of it all. He was dying as he stood.

"But, by the ineffable names of Allah, Rais Murray is not dead!" he murmured.

A whaleboat swung, lashed in davits, almost beside him. He drew his knife, slashed at the lines, severed them, swung out the boat, caught and held her there. With a tremendous effort he bent all his gaunt strength, picked up Murray and laid the limp figure in the boat. Then he staggered and gasped once as the blood spurted from his side.

"Allah!" he cried out chokingly.

How he got the boat down was impossible to say; he moved in a red haze of death and his strength ebbed. From aft the smoke rose more thickly in a crackling rush of flame that spouted high, yet he scarce observed it. The boat was in the water at last and, grasping the falls, he let himself down. He cut loose an oar and sculled with it a space, so that the boat floated out away from the burning schooner.

More than this Ibrahim could not do.

"Rais Murray!" he cried out in a great voice. "Rais Murray!"

That voice pierced through Murray's unconsciousness and recalled him. He opened his eyes, moved weakly, turned his head and saw Ibrahim standing above him, a shaking crimson figure with death gray in the face.

"Ibrahim!"

"They have gone to Diego, Rais," cried out the Arab. "You will live. Remember! To Diego Suarez to get the mail-boat. By Allah and Allah! There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the prophet of God!"

With the creed of his faith thus on his lips, Ibrahim's knees loosened and he fell forward, so that the boat lunged and rocked. And when Murray touched his face he was dead.

V

FROM the house of Ram Das, Carvahal saw the schooner stealing out of the bay that morning just after sunrise, then he went back to his bed and slept an hour longer. He was delighted with his breakfast when it arrived. In place of the French meal, it was a fine honest Hindu feast of curried rice, sweetmeats, coffee and other things. Carvahal gorged.

He had just finished when the two Arabs whom Murray had set ashore arrived and were shown to his presence. Ram Das followed almost at once, for it was necessary to discuss the hiring of men. He spoke to Carvahal with a slight frown.

"Sahib, thy servant has been wondering about the men mentioned by Captain Murray last night—the man Ferraud who engaged him. I have questioned my servants, and I do not find any such man known here."

The boy glanced up sharply.

"Eh? That is strange, certainly! Yet there can be no mistake—" He broke off and turned to the two Arabs. "You saw this man? What was he like?"

One of the men described the appearance of Ferraud.

"Nay, that is not Ferraud!" exclaimed Ram Das. "That man is M. Delorte, the brother of Lieutenant Delorte, who has come recently from Lourenço Marques!"

Lourenço Marques! The name snatched at Carvahal's attention. Then one of the Arabs spoke up eagerly.

"Rais, that man came aboard yesterday with Lieutenant Delorte. I heard what was said. The lieutenant introduced him as M. Ferraud!"

Carvahal's nostrils twitched suddenly, as those of a dog smelling game.

"And the same man came aboard this morning? Who was with him? Describe everything that was said and done. Omit nothing."

He made Ram Das a signal of caution and lighted a cigaret. The Arabs, between them, related everything they could remember of the sayings and doings of the morning. When they had finished, Carvahal nodded quietly.

"Go outside and wait."

They departed. Once the door had closed behind them, the boy leaped from his seat and faced Ram Das, quivering.

"You heard? There is something crooked going on! Do you know these Delortes?"

Ram Das knew only the talk of the bazars and, reading between the lines of that as he very well could, Carvahal's alarm increased. Raoul Delorte had just come from Lourenço. Did he know, then, about the diamonds? Possibly—nay, probably! Tremendous potentialities hinged on the name of Lourenço Marques when the Soronho diamonds were in the offing.

"He is alone aboard the schooner with Ibrahim, and this Ferraud, or Delorte, has put seven Sakalavas aboard," flashed the boy. "How soon can you find out who those men were?"

He drove straight as a die to the heart of the thing.

"In ten minutes, sahib."

"Do so."

The ten minutes were slow to pass, but they passed, and Ram Das returned with a panting Hindu who served him. His face was grave.

"No good news, sahib. Those seven men were of bad reputation, prison birds."

"Enough!" shaped the boy. "I want a boat, a pilot who knows the waters and men to go with me. I shall follow the schooner to Nosi Mitsio. Can you provide?"

"I have a dhow in the harbor, just arrived from Majunga," reflected the Hindu. "She departs the first of next week for Zanzibar. Her men are trustworthy and her rais knows every reef along the coast. To hire a native boat is easy. When do you wish to go?"

"As quickly as the boat can be made ready," snapped the boy. "Those two Arabs will go with me, also."

In three minutes Carvahal was on his way down to the waterfront.

It was nearly nine o'clock when his fishing craft, with ten men aboard, nosed out of the bay and headed out the eastern passage. The schooner was an hour and a half ahead of him, but the native boat was faster and need not fear the shoals, so that she could cut corners with impunity.

The boy forced himself to patience. As the noonday blaze drew on there opened out ahead the thirty scattered reefs and islands of the Nosi Mitsio group with their fantastic shapes piercing the horizon. Carvahal had forgotten glasses, but needed none; a shout from one of the Arabs, and he too could see the sudden appearance of the schooner.

"Nosi Kajohi!" cried their pilot.

Just south of Nosi Mitsio, from this direction appearing like two stupendous riven masses of rock, appeared a smaller islet, and they sighted the schooner lying near this, coming into sight as they drove forward with the last of the breeze. She was in the lee of the island, her canvas idly flapping. A tiny brown speck appeared beyond her.

"A boat and sail!" cried an Arab. He was right. This was Ferraud's boat departing.

Then Carvahal saw the tiny trickle of smoke ascending from the schooner.

The boy burst into a paroxysm of oaths in half a dozen languages, furious alarm and consternation filling him. The wind was failing, but it picked up again momentarily and bore them on. The speck of sail beyond the schooner disappeared and was gone. The smoke thickened from the larger vessel. Amazed, incredulous, Carvahal saw that she was going up in flames.

They drove down at her, oars out to help the speed. Now they made out the floating whale-boat detaching itself from the schooner, drifting a little to one side. Flames were now belching up from the schooner, her canvas roaring briefly, smoke bellying from her vitals, but it was at the whale-boat they looked. An Arab shouted exultantly.

"Rais Murray! In the boat!"

They were bearing down on the scene now, men sweating over the oars, the native craft urging forward through unruffled calm waters. A figure sat up in the whale-boat, and Carvahal saw that it was Murray, and stood up, waving his arms, shouting excitedly. Then fear gripped into him, so still was that sitting figure, a smear of scarlet across the face.

So at last they came alongside, while a hundred yards distant the schooner roared and crackled in flame and seared them with the heat of the burning. Furious oaths burst from the Arabs at sight of Ibrahim lying there dead, but Murray smiled faintly and lifted a hand, stopping Carvahal as the latter was about to come aboard.

"There!" he said, pointing to a dried reef to their right. "Land first. Talk."

A man made fast a line. They took the whale-boat in tow, pulling frantically to get away from the blistering heat of the burning schooner. Carvahal was frantic, tears on his cheeks, as he saw how Murray was hurt and helpless, a knife-haft protruding from his left shoulder, the ragged tear of a bullet across his scalp, his leg hurt. He fainted as they came to the reef.

The men gently laid him ashore. Carvahal and one of the Arabs tended him, drew out the knife and bound up his hurts; the leg was not broken. The other men grouped about, staring from Murray to the blazing schooner, chattering excitedly. After a little Murray awoke again, and Carvahal helped him to sit up. Despite his deathly pallor, Murray was clear-headed.

"Good work, son," he said quietly. "A drink. Is the schooner done for?"

"Done for," echoed Carvahal, tears on his cheeks.

He had Murray seated back to the schooner, mercifully. Murray realized it, and his eyes warmed. He drank thirstily. Then the boy poured out all his story and demanded information concerning Ferraud and the other murderers. Murray shook his head, then spoke, looking at the brown men around.

"Ye served Ram Das?" he asked in Swahili. "Then listen to what is said, for I must trust to you and him. First, son, the thief was Lieutenant Delorte, who took what was hid in the cabin and fled with it. He caught the boat last night to Durban. And now you tell me Ferraud was his brother! That makes everything clear. Let me think."

He lay back and closed his eyes, his head resting against the boy. Presently he looked at the brown men.

"When does your dhow sail for Zanzibar?"

"The first of the week, rais," came the response. "Before if loaded."

"If we wait and go slowly, reaching Hellville after dark, can ye get me to the house of Ram Das unseen?"

"Aye, rais effendi, with the help of Allah!"

"How badly am I hurt?" he demanded of Carvahal.

"Your leg is badly hurt. The wound in your shoulder is bad and will bring fever. That in your head is only a scratch."

"A cigaret."

Carvahal lighted a cigaret for him, and Murray pondered. After a moment he spoke in English, bitterly.

"You see, son? One took the stones and skipped out with them. The other delayed to make sure of me. Thinks he has done so. Only Ibrahim's wit and your fears saved me. Ferraud, or Raoul Delorte, catches the mail-boat from Diego Suez on Friday. It stops at Hellville Friday night. But I can not have the —— touched. There is a warning out against me. The French want to arrest me, it seems. If I show my face again in Hellville, I'll be pinched. The best I can do is to get to Zanzibar by this dhow belonging to Ram Das. Once there, I'm safe. But I'll be too late to catch this Raoul Delorte! Oh, if I were only sound of body! Don't you see, don't you see? He's going to Europe, to Paris, and will meet his brother there. He'd lead us to the stones! There's a fortune lost because I'm shot to pieces."

The boy's eyes glittered.

"You've lost your fortune, but I've saved mine," he exclaimed. "You said the stones were ours. I hold you to it!"

Murray smiled faintly.

"Right. Small good they'll do you now, son."

"No!" exclaimed the boy.

Bitterness came into Murray's face.

"It's more of a loss than you know," he said softly. "I should have told you before. I was waiting, son. The stones are not mine at all, but belong to you by rights. Your father died to get them."

"My father?" Carvahal's eyes widened. "What do you mean? I have no father except you."

"But you had," said Murray. "He was Soronho, a fine man, a Portuguese. I know from what he told me before he died. You are his son."

Carvahal drew a deep breath, then interrupted.

"I'm your son," he said quietly. "Now listen to me! I have some right to those stones, you say?"

"Every right, but I've lost them for you."

"We'll gain them back again. Like this! Neither of those precious brethren knows anything about me. They've never seen me. Nobody at Hellville except Ram Das knows that I came on your schooner. Well, then, I'll take half my francs, you take the other half. I'll catch the mail-boat Friday night and trail this Raoul Delorte to Paris. You'll reach Zanzibar in time to get the next boat after us. Lieutenant Delorte, who went by way of the Cape, will be much longer than we in reaching Paris. You should get there about the same time. I'll play safe, do nothing until you come, get into the confidence of this Raoul Delorte. We'll—"

"No, no!" broke out Murray impulsively. "Let the accursed stones go! I'd not stake them against you, son. Those two men are unscrupulous ——. They'd think nothing of murdering you as they tried to murder me. What's worse, you're ignorant of the world. You've never been away from the Comoro islands. You can't compete with men like that!"

Carvahal's boyish face set in thin lines of strength, of determination.

"Nonsense!" he said sharply. "Everybody must go to Paris the first time. Well, I shall go. As for those men, never worry! I have wits no less than they, and perhaps better ones." A touch of bitterness came into his voice. "If I have had to steal for my daily bread in the bazars, can not I match myself against two rascals? Besides, I'll wait for you. My job shall be to trail, and I can do that."

"I won't have it," said Murray stubbornly.

The boy smiled a little.

"You've nothing to say about it," he retorted. "You've lost your schooner, your money, your fortune. I leave a hundred thousand francs with you and take the other hundred thousand. If you wish to abandon me, you may do so. But I go to Paris on Delorte's trail. That is certain! The diamonds are not mine, but ours. I can not compel you to join me in Paris, so if you don't come, I'll go ahead and—"

"Oh, have it your own way, you obstinate little ——!" said Murray, and his hand clenched on that of the boy. "I'm afraid for you, son, that's all! All right, it's agreed. Go ahead, and I'll be along with the next boat."

Carvahal grinned.

VI

"CLEVER," said Raoul Delorte to himself admiringly. "Very clever!"

He was watching the boy—not yet fifteen years of age, he shrewdly surmised—who had the nerve to make the journey to Europe alone and unfriended. On the passenger list his name was down as Ernest Rodriguez, combination of English and Portuguese, perhaps. There was a singular something about the boy, an odd note, and Delorte caught it instantly. After this he probed.

Seated alone at a side table in the liner's saloon, the boy watched without seeming to watch. He took in every detail, noted everything done by his fellow passengers, obviously learning all the while, and imitated them. It was done unobtrusively and with a rapidity amounting to intuition. One watching, as Delorte watched, very closely would have said the boy was more used to eating with fingers alone than with a knife and fork, yet he managed the tools of the meal and the meal itself with excellent results. And all by copy-work, though only Delorte guessed this.

During the next few weeks Delorte had little on his hands, so that this ever-nimble mind demanded some sort of interest. Thus, his attention was swift to fasten upon the supposed half-caste, for there was nothing else aboard to occupy him. Certain problems presented themselves to him, since he had the analytic turn of mind which will not permit its owner to rest unthinkingly. To find out why this boy traveled thus, quite alone; to ascertain whither he was bound, why he was going, what were the details of his history—these puzzles were fascinating to Raoul. It would be a pleasant recreation, getting at the boy's intentions, prying into his history, learning his story, pitting his own keen mentality against the element of mystery. For here Delorte visioned some sort of mystery; normal parents do not let their young sons make trips of six thousand miles unaccompanied. This Ernest Rodriguez would be worth study.

And all this while Ernest Rodriguez was acutely aware of every glance from Delorte.

Ever since his unostentatious slipping aboard at Zanzibar, Carvahal had quite had the man summed up, and what was more to the point, had quite mapped out his own plan of campaign. Delorte was a nervous man, highly strung. Very well! He had had dealings ere this with men of similar nature.

Carvahal was watched, and he was also the watcher. Since, from his fuller point of view, he had far more at stake, he managed his business far more cleverly. The only time Delorte surprized him in a look, the boy's gaze was a dreamy, meditative stare, as if, indeed, he were looking clean through the man and unaware of his existence.

Being sensitive, with every faculty keenly alert and all his self-consciousness aroused, Carvahal was aware how Delorte noted his every movement and act, perceived how Delorte saw through his copy-work and how Delorte admired his cleverness. All this was in his first meal aboard the boat, the first day out. Carvahal lunched well, since the table was excellent, and he was a thorough practitioner of Captain Dalgety's doctrine—although he had never heard of this hero—always eat heartily when the chance comes, for you know not when you may have the chance again.

The meal ended, he followed Delorte on deck and there located a chair while Delorte paced by the rail, smoking a cigaret. Presently Carvahal rose and went below; a little later Delorte followed him. The door of Carvahal's cabin was on the hook, and the curtain was pulled across the slit which might otherwise have given a view of the companionway, but the boy had made a hole in that curtain upon ascertaining that Delorte was berthed only two doors down on the opposite side. He waited patiently at the hole, until he saw Delorte come down the stairs and go to his own cabin.

Delorte went into his cabin, and then paused, looking down. Upon the floor lay a slip of paper. Stooping, he picked it up, only to drop it an instant later with an exclamation which reached to the ears of the listening boy. For scrawled across the paper were the words:

N'oubliez pas le Firefly, *M. Ferraud!*

"Don't forget the *Firefly*, Monsieur Ferraud!" These terrible words must have pierced into Delorte like stabbing steel. He came out of his cabin again, and now his face was whiter than normal, his eyes staring. He glanced up the corridor and down, he stared at cabin doors as if expecting them to yield some key to the mystery of that paper and finally, with an audible oath that was half a groan of anger, he returned to the stairs and ascended to the deck.

Carvahal, with a deep sigh of satisfaction, lay down in his berth, lighted a cigaret and grinned comfortably to himself. This was only the beginning, and it worked well, very well, indeed!

A half-hour afterward Carvahal went on deck. After a time he found Delorte, away from any other passengers, staring out gloomily over the rail. Carvahal came up quietly behind him, and then cleared his throat. Delorte swung around with a startled manner.

"Pardon, m'sieu," said the boy apologetically. "*Est ce que vous avez une alumette?*"

The swarthy man's eyes lighted up at hearing his own tongue from this boy, and almost eagerly he proffered a box of matches.

"It is a pleasure to hear one's own language so excellently spoken," he said, smiling.

"Thank you," responded the boy gravely, and held out a cigaret case.

Delorte accepted one and lighted it. He found himself compelled to treat this child as another man, now that it came to speech, and the oddity of the thing intrigued him, fascinated him. It was not mere precocity in the boy, he decided, but something far deeper, meaning far more. He was possessed of astonishing intuition at times, was this Frenchman. He would have said that the boy knew much more than any one of his years had a right to know, and perhaps he would have spoken the truth.

"You are going home?" he queried.

Carvahal shook his head.

"I am going to my uncle in Paris. At least, I am to join my uncle there. I have no longer any home since my father died."

Delorte made a sound, at once an expression of sympathy and an invitation to proceed. He was interested.

What a fluent liar was Carvahal when he so wished! He gave details, facts, names, omitted nothing.

"Thus you see," he pursued, "that since my mother's death, my father has been much away on trading ventures, leaving me at school in Zanzibar—a sort of school, a species of school, bah! Then, after my father was lost at sea, I waited until the priest could hear from Paris. My uncle arranged things. I am here. It is all new to me, this life."

The simplicity of this was very touching. It was all said with a ring of absolute sincerity, and Delorte forgot his own recent shock.

"A terrible thing, the death of a father!" he observed. "A blow to you, no?"

"Yes. I have waited six months since my father died, and without him it has been six years. How little did I think when he departed that I should never see him again! Six long months, alone among strangers, for the priest was a stranger, though he was kind enough. And my poor father, sunk with our ship—"

"His own ship, perhaps?" said Delorte, caught by the way the boy spoke.

"Yes, his own. Fortunately insured with

cargo. She was sunk off Madagascar, between Hellville and Nosi Mitsio, they say. Eh, m'sieu? You are a little ill?"

Delorte stared, and for an instant glowered at the boy in black suspicion. His face was quite pale. Carvahal met his gaze with sympathetic concern, and so transparently innocent was he of any double meaning in his words that Delorte was instantly ashamed of his own half suspicion. Plenty of others spoke French. There was some one aboard who came from Hellville, but Delorte could not discover who it was, despite all his care, all his pumping, all his examinations.

He worked hard, prying here and there endeavoring to find who it was might have come from Madagascar, and could not. He took Carvahal into his confidence one day. They were grown firm friends by now. He spoke craftily, smoothly, enlisted the boy's aid.

"You see, some one aboard is from Madagascar, some man who threatens me. I do not know the person. Later, perhaps he means to reveal himself. Nothing gives any clue. See what you can pick up, what you can overhear as you pass along the deck!"

Boyishly eager and interested, Carvahal swore ready allegiance. Five minutes later Delorte went below and, upon entering his own cabin, found a card stuck in the edge of the mirror. On the card was a very neat calligraphy:

M. Raoul Ferraud
Scientist —— Photographer.

Delorte savagely tore the card across and flung it through the port-hole.

Day followed day, and the liner crept northward, up past the Somali coast, up into the blazing heat of the Red Sea. It was early summer, the most beautiful time of year elsewhere on earth, but not between Suez and Aden. Here the heat was stupendous, terrific, the deck hot underfoot, all hands sleeping in the open, the lower ship unendurable; in this stifling atmosphere men became irritable, nerves inflamed, tempers uncertain. Trifling things became of gigantic import.

All this while Delorte had found himself unable to discover the least thing, nor had Carvahal's assistance been of any avail. Delorte and the boy had become fast friends. He liked this odd little fellow, so queerly old for his years, and had constituted himself the boy's protector and champion. Carvahal was very careful to let the man see only the one side of him, the boyish side, not the capable and ruthless side educated in the bazars and native huts.

During this while, too, Delorte's uneasiness had grown into a frantic, shaken terror. Somewhere, somehow, there had been a leak. The very impossibility of it served to increase his fright; the thing was beyond comprehension. Every two or three days he found in his cabin some message from the unknown persecutor, and never could he trap the sender, though he and Carvahal both watched carefully.

Three days out of Suez came the culminating blow. During this insufferable time of heat. Delorte had gone ragged with the torture inflicted upon him. He dared not sleep on deck. The first time he tried it, he found a card bearing Ferraud's name slipped in his very pocket. He slept in his locked cabin, a pistol under his pillow. On board this ship was somebody who knew the truth, somebody who knew of his crime, somebody who was waiting, waiting most terribly! If he could only communicate with his brother! But he could not.

Carvahal, meantime, made careful calculations. He reckoned up the date of their arrival in Paris and the probable time of Murray's arrival there, and this brought him to the end of May. He wrote out a final card and smiled to himself as he looked at it.

"Perhaps!" he said. "Perhaps!"

That night, when Delorte turned in, he saw the card lying on his cabin floor. He scarce dared to touch it, yet was compelled lest the steward find it and suspect something. With shaking fingers he picked it up and turned it over, and a low cry came from his grayish lips as he read the words written there:

On May 30th the *Firefly* will be avenged.

Oddly enough, the effect of this card on Delorte was rather steadying than otherwise. The man had given up all hope of finding the author of these mysterious messages, for his suspicions had been able to converge on no one person. Never, after the first shock, had he dreamed of suspecting the trusting innocent Ernest Rodriguez, who was so wonderfully sympathetic and understanding for a boy of his years. Now, with this definite date in mind, Delorte felt himself doomed, but he also felt that until this date arrived he had nothing to fear. His daily and hourly apprehension was gloomily lifted. He was given until the end of the month to live.

His brother, Jean Marie, would laugh at such mysterious terrors. A month previously he himself would have laughed at them. But now. The fact remained that with him was traveling somebody who had full cognizance of his crime, somebody who waited either to expose him to the police or else to take personal vengeance. He said no more to the boy about his pursuers, let the matter drop so far as Carvahal was concerned, not daring to keep the affair fresh in Carvahal's mind lest the boy become frightened and mention it to others, even to the police.

Delorte took to drink, thinking to steady himself further.

Carvahal took careful note of all this and comprehended the change in the man. He was tempted to regret having given a definite date, yet perhaps it was just as well. He meant to stick close to Delorte, must stick close to him, and did not want a gibbering, shaken man at his elbow until Murray came. Perhaps it was all for the best, this momentary steadiness. Delorte would have relapses into frantic terror. Carvahal meant to see to this. But now if the messages ended for a time, until after they reached Marseilles, hope would spring in Delorte, who would fancy that the pursuer had been shaken off. Then a still more mysterious threat.

Carvahal planned it with smiling, infernal enjoyment. He meant to take full pay for Ibrahim, for the schooner, for Murray, for everything! There was no pity in this boy. Nor did Delorte deserve pity.

VII

THE forged papers of Ernest Rodriguez were found quite in order, and at Marseilles he was free of French soil.

He traveled up to Paris with Delorte and sought advice as to where to stay and how to comport himself under the strange circumstances fate had forced upon him. At times he spoke of his father, and managed a most realistic quiver of the lip. Carvahal had more than once acted for his life among Arabs and Malagasies, and to deceive a Frenchman was not a hard matter. He did it artistically, thoroughly, with due regard for the little niceties which mark the genius as distinct from the ordinary performer.

Delorte was glad to forget his own worries in finding that this boy leaned so heavily on him for help. He felt sorry for the chap, long ere they reached the throbbing gare, and Carvahal clutched his arm in fear before the vibrating roar of Paris. He was no little amazed that nobody met the boy, that Carvahal was forced to make his own arrangements, but since money did not lack, things would straighten themselves out sooner or later. Delorte recommended the Hotel St. James in the Rue St. Honoré, and offered to conduct his charge thither.

As the taxi started off, Carvahal was indubitably bewildered and a little awed, yet he stared at the city with wide eyes of delight. More than once the whizzing taxicabs caused him to catch his breath and clench his hands hard, until he came to realize that however close came the vehicles, they never actually collided. His emotions were genuine enough here, and Delorte was amused by watching him. By the time they reached the group of menials at the hotel doorway, Carvahal was himself again.

Delorte ushered him in, saw to his registry, explained matters to the hotel management and generally exerted himself on behalf of his charge. He volunteered to get upon the track of the missing uncle, but Carvahal disposed of this offer. He had a lawyer's address, he said, and would go there on the morrow. A letter would certainly be waiting for him. His uncle was in business in England and perhaps had been delayed in coming to meet him. These men of affairs, engaged in big business! It was all explained with an air half childish, half mature, which Delorte found captivating. This boy was a perpetual source of wonder to him, ever revealing some new aspect of his nature.

Once Carvahal was installed, they came back to the *entresol* of the hotel and seated themselves at one of the little wicker tables. Delorte ordered a cognac, while Carvahal, somewhat against his will, contented himself with a *café*. A neat, correctly attired little figure, he sat back in his chair, gazing about with all the assurance of a man of the world, so that Raoul Delorte hid his amusement. When Delorte lifted his eyes and glanced about, however, his amusement was dissipated by sight of a large calendar on the wall. It was the eighth of May. He calculated swiftly. Twenty-two days more!

Carvahal saw the glance and divined the thought.

"A fine place, *mon vieux*," and the boy swaggered. "It becomes me, this hotel! I am enormously indebted to you for all your help, and would that it were within my power to repay. However, God is good. Whatever one does, repayment comes sooner or later."

It was said comfortingly, cheeringly, but it made Delorte squirm, this last sentence, since he was facing that ominous calendar. Then he sat up, suddenly, and shot swift glances about the place, his eyes keen and alert. Carvahal divined this thought, too. If the unknown persecutor from the boat had followed here, the man might be recognized! The actual persecutor, sitting across the table from Delorte, kept his face straight with difficulty.

"And you, m'sieu?" he asked. "Where do you stay in Paris? I trust we shall meet again after so pleasant a voyage together."

"But of a certainty, we must meet," agreed Delorte. "I shall see if a pension I used to know, in the Avenue Victor Hugo, is still available. I am not exactly a person of wealth, and me, I shall not stop at this hotel, yet."

Then he could have bitten out his tongue over having let fall this last word.

"It will come," Carvahal consoled him. "It will come! Fate deals strange blows, but always justly in the end. Such a good, kind friend as you have proved yourself deserves full recompense for your deeds, here or elsewhere. You will let me know your address, since I know not a person in all this city?"

"Of a surety," assented Delorte with another squirm at this doctrine of recompense. "I must show you something of our beautiful Paris, too. I shall be free for—for another two weeks or so."

"It is very kind of you," said the boy.

That afternoon when he was alone Carvahal explored much of the tourist section in his immediate vicinity, and came home a trifle confused and dazed by the city's immensity and noise. His first task, he knew, was to get a thorough working knowledge of Paris, for he might find himself in heart-hurried need of it, and in him the instinct was strong to rely ever upon himself and not be caught napping.

At dinner that night he made a curious, lonely little figure, sitting at his table by himself. Nonetheless, he had the faculty of keeping his ears open. Later, as he sat in the *entresol* smoking cigarets, to the amusement of the tourists around him, he received some natural and yet astonishing help in his errand.

A man and woman sitting behind him—Americans, he thought—were talking of the recent sale of Russian crown jewels on the curb market. Carvahal, sitting there idly but in reality listening with all his ears, had no idea what a curb market was, above all what a curb market for jewels might be, but he soon learned a good deal.

He learned from the conversation that in the Rue Lafayette was a café, frequented by dealers and agents, where all sorts of transactions in jewels, large and small, were conducted. No registry of these transactions were required, no records were kept; the agents handled stones for principals who did not wish to appear. Thus the method of disposal was ideal for those who stole stones in Russia—or Madagascar. Stones worth millions exchanged hands every day on this unofficial *bourse*.

Carvahal felt himself on the track here, for it was a moral certainty that the Delorte brethren would go to work with the Soronho diamonds by this method. From his experiences in the ports of the south, he could guess well enough the character of this market, but he needed details. Everything must be ready when Murray arrived. And to this end he must keep Raoul Delorte on the rack, strung up to funk until Murray arrived. Another fortnight. Carvahal figured that Murray should arrive a good three days ahead of Jean Marie Delorte.

Meantime, the location of this jewel market and also of Raoul Delorte. Next morning the boy took a taxicab and made his way to the head office of Cook's at the corner of the Place de la Madeleine. Here he inquired for letters, and was not surprized to find none. Too soon, of course. There was a cable, however, for Mr. Rodriguez, and this cable, sent from Zanzibar, rejoiced his heart. It was curt and to the point:

Starting. MURRAY.

Looking up the Castle sailings, the boy found his figuring correct enough. The

Kinfaun Castle would dock at Southampton, bringing Jean Marie Delorte, a day after Murray arrived by the east route at Marseilles, and Delorte would be another day in reaching Paris. Thus Murray would surely arrive ahead of Delorte by a day at least, possibly more.

Carvahal had made no plans, trusting entirely to the coming of Murray and the compositions of destiny. How the recovery of the diamonds was to come about did not worry him at present. A fatalist through and through by reason of his upbringing among Arabs and natives, he told himself that time would solve this problem. Time solved all problems, and man's only real troubles were caused by impatience.

With the coming of this cable, then, Carvahal controlled his own impatience very well. All Paris awaited his eyes, a new world to him, and he had Raoul Delorte to play with. His least compunction would have been stilled by thought of old Ibrahim, giving his life in that last gallant rescue of Murray, but compunction and Carvahal were utter strangers. He had enjoyed Delorte's writhings, grinned over them and planned more. The actual suffering of the man mentally was keen pleasure.

Another fortnight, then! One could see much of Paris in a fortnight, but meanwhile was work to be done. When evening came, Carvahal took a taxi to the Avenue Victor Hugo, and had himself dropped near the statue of France's great genius. Patience was his, patience of the primitive man, of the hunter.

He walked up and down the wide street, ceaselessly, depending less on himself than on chance. Tireless, he took no thought of time, enjoying every new sight around him, shop windows, the very houses. Chance combined with keen eyes to favor him. It was nearly eleven o'clock, and he was close to the Bois de Boulogne end of the avenue when from a taxi descended a figure he was swift to recognize. Blessing the hand of coincidence, which was but another name for the hand of Allah, Carvahal took note of the house into which Delorte disappeared and its number. He summoned the next taxi to pass with flag up, and directed the driver to Versailles.

That driver had a surprize, for he demurred at seeking Versailles and passing the gates at this time of night and, having a boy to deal with, was none too gentle in his demur. Cavahal talked to him for twenty seconds in a flood of vituperation which left the Paris-hardened chauffeur gasping and in a state of surrender. The journey was made.

At Versailles, Carvahal sought a *tabac* café, took his driver inside for a drink and demanded writing materials. At the stamp counter he stamped his letter, dropped it into the box outside the door and ordered his chauffeur back to the Place de la Madeleine. He had no mind to leave a straight trail home to his hotel.

"Now we'll see," reflected Carvahal contentedly. "He may move his lodging, of course. It would be the logical thing to do, yet the logical thing is seldom done by men, especially in his condition. He'll probably consider it useless. I'll gamble on his nerves!"

When Raoul Delorte wakened next morning and rang for his *petit déjeuner*, he found upon his tray a letter. It informed him:

> Twenty-one days more and the murderer of the *Firefly* will receive his just reward.

Carvahal did well to gamble on Delorte's nerves. He won his gamble.

VIII

JEAN MARIE DELORTE stood blankly staring at his brother.

"But," he exclaimed with a gesture, "this is incredible, incredible! You left the man dead? But you must have made a mistake. Think, think! Tell me—"

"I left him dead." Raoul half sulked with his response. "Certainly he was dead! A knife in him and two bullets. The schooner was so well ablaze as not to be saved."

For a moment his eyes darkened wildly at the recollection. In Madagascar waters it had gone well enough, but here in Paris, with his nerves all in a jangle, the recurrent scent was horrible to think about. His brother spoke sharply.

"Think! There must have been some one to escape, an Arab?"

"He left two Arabs ashore in Hellville, but they could have known nothing."

"Somebody knows. There was no sail in sight?"

"Yes. A fishing boat."

"Ah! You fool!" exclaimed Jean Marie. The other flashed hotly back.

"A sail, miles away? Nonsense! And there was little wind. It was dying out rapidly. The fishing boat could never have reached there in time."

"Hm! Well, well, no use arguing over what is done. Let us see—" Jean Marie broke off, carefully scrutinizing the two papers handed him by Raoul. This time he gave them keen and minute attention.

"Odd!" he mused. "All in this same curious script, as if one had printed them to evade recognition of handwriting! You received other messages on the boat, you say?"

"Many," asserted Raoul gloomily. He was overcome by the thought of this patient, awful watcher who perhaps watched them even at this moment. "It's hopeless, hopeless!"

He sat with his brother in his own room at the pension in the Avenue Victor Hugo. The impossibility of being overheard was clear, and yet he spoke in hushed whispers, half voices. The man was frightened, and the liquor he had taken to steady him did not conduce to any betterment of his condition.

"Your fellow passengers?" asked Jean Marie.

He was the officer now, crisp and to the point, searching out this mystery as he would search out some petty mystery of the barracks or parade. Raoul spread his hands in a hopeless gesture.

"Scores of them, scores of them, and all like—like so many tortoises! Not a clue anywhere. One family from Diego Suarez and some missionaries from Tamatave, no others from Madagascar. And these were out of the question. I went over things very carefully, and nowhere was there any opening."

"Some native chief, perhaps, coming to Paris?"

"None on our boat. I kept watch. It was useless. I have not been followed in Paris. Useless. Jean Marie, it was ——!"

"Yes, yes, of course." His brother soothed him. "And it is still ——, since I have not dared dispose of what I brought. Once we have managed the disposal, this business will come to a head or will cease. It is not you they seek, my brother, or they had struck ere this. The thing simplifies itself. Our trail is not yet sufficiently cleared, that is all. Patience! We will manage it."

So he talked, endeavoring to key up the shaken man. Knowing Raoul's nature, he realized the difficulty of the task, for imagination was the man's worst enemy. With one possible exception.

Jean Marie did not at all blind himself to the enormity of Raoul's crime off Nosi Mitsio. If any one member of that schooner's crew had escaped, he might well be relentless in seeking vengeance; those Arabs were terrible men. The cold temptation smote him to sell the stones and bolt, but he was not the sort of man to entertain it. Raoul was a demon when it came to action, and would buck up, inevitably. Together they had entered on the scheme and together they must see it through—brothers in arms as in blood.

"This writer has given no clue, eh? Yet there must be some means of discovering—"

"There is none, I tell you!" cried out Raoul frantically. This very morning he had received another missive, telling him that the flames of the burning *Firefly* were not so hot as the flames of hell. He was a broken, shattered man. "None! None!" he repearted wildly.

"Nobody you could recognize, hold to account? Nobody you saw time and again?"

"*Dieu de dieu!*" burst out Raoul. "Would that I had never told you a word of it! This useless inquisition—"

"No inquisition is useless," said the more resolute and practical brother. "Patience! They have got you shaken. Such was their plan, undoubtedly. There can not be more than one concerned in this. Let us go out and consult over other things with the help of an aperitif. A little companionship, a little glimpse of practical things, eh? You are terrified of shadows, but they hurt nobody. They are shadows, and that is why they have not hurt you, if you would only realize it."

"It is no shadow," said Raoul gloomily. "It is somebody who knows."

Well aware of this indubitable fact, Jean Marie perceived the necessity of a constant vigilance. For the time being, however, he must devote himself to upbuilding Raoul, for he might well have need of Raoul's aid if this terrible menace came to a head.

The two brethren sought the wide square before the Trocadero, and there settled down over a café table, with the delicate tracery of the Eiffel Tower cutting the sky before them and little fleecy clouds hanging high over Seine's many ridges. Jean Marie went to work. It was his business to build the morale of men, and he put all his skill into play. Step by step he lured Raoul to forgetfulness of the invisible domain and into talk of normal things, into a normal view of the world around.

Remembrance of the Rodriguez lad came to Raoul, and he fell eagerly to telling about this boy who had attracted him. Jean Marie listened with half-narrowed eyes, and presently cut in with a swift question.

"This boy came aboard at Zanzibar, you say? Did he come with you on the mail-boat?"

"No. At least I did not see him. Why, the boy was in school at Zanzibar!"

"You had never seen him before, then?"

"Never." Raoul Delorte broke into a laugh of sheer amusement. "Suspicious of him? Bah! It were folly."

"You were not drunk, perhaps, when an incautious word might have fallen?"

"You should know me better. I may drink, but I am never incautious."

Jean Marie nodded, for he did know better.

"Your pardon," he murmured.

"You shall see this boy," went on Raoul with interest. "Something about him is very singular. Perhaps he is a half-caste, although he has none of the outward marks of half-blood. A combination of fine breeding and absolute ignorance. A man of the world and again a mere child. It was odd to watch him when we arrived in Paris! He is devoted to me, Jean Marie."

Jean Marie elevated his eyebrows and did not answer, being more than a little distrustful of this friendship. He knew his brother's freakish likes and dislikes, his temperamental potentiality, and felt that his own practical shrewdness was needed to supplement the intuitive faculty of Raoul. Left alone, Raoul was likely to wander off on false tracks, and this might be a case in point.

"Where is he, this boy?" he inquired abruptly.

"At a tourist hotel, the St. James, catering for the English. His uncle arrives soon to take care of him. I have seen the letter. A few days more."

True enough. Carvahal had written an excellent letter, which was then translated into English and typed for him at an agency. Raoul Delorte had certainly seen it.

"Let us pay a visit to this friend of yours," suggested Jean Marie. "Now, at once, before *déjeuner*. He has a certain interest for me, this boy."

"And the—the things you brought?" asked Raoul. He had put his soul in pawn for stones he had never seen, ironically enough.

"One does not find a market for such value in five minutes," said the other. "For a small parcel of cut stones, yes. Tourists are many, money is easy. For these things, uncut, the matter is very different. However, I have put out inquiries as to the best people to handle the transaction. Tomorrow I shall have definite word."

"Tomorrow," said Raoul slowly, "is the thirtieth."

"Come, old one," returned his brother with affectionate reproach, "be a man! Recall. Man's worst troubles are those which never happen. This sender of letters, what has he done? He has sent letters. *Voilà!* He has nothing else to send. You have ignored them, and such is the best course. Continue to ignore them, and so they will cease. Fools threaten, Raoul. Wise men act."

"True," said Raoul. "We shall see—tomorrow."

"We shall see, the day after tomorrow," corrected his brother, and rose. "Let us be off to see this boy."

They crossed the square to the Metro, changed at Marbeuf to the Nord-Sud and came above-ground at the Tuileries station, crossing the Rue de Rivoli and entering the hotel from this entrance. While a page went in search of the boy Rodriguez, the two brethren took one of the wicker tables and made themselves comfortable.

PRESENTLY Carvahal appeared, and he was unable to shake off a certain worry and anxiety. Raoul introduced his brother and inquired as to the cause of the boy's worried look.

"My uncle," returned Carvahal. "I had expected some further word from him, but when I went to Cook's this morning, there was none."

True enough. There had been no word from Murray, who was now a day overdue, and more. And here before him was Jean Marie Delorte, with the Soronho diamonds no doubt ensconced on his person this minute!

"If it is a question of money," suggested Raoul, but the boy dissented, laughing.

"A thousand thanks. It is anything but that! Simply that I have been so long alone, and seeing so many people—" his lip quivered slightly. "One day follows another, and I am still alone. And I am not so old, perhaps."

He ended on hesitation. It was all exquisitely done, and any half-formed suspicion sticking like a burr in the mind of Jean Marie was dissipated. Covert though his inspection might be, those eyes of his were piercingly alert, and Carvahal turned to him with an air of frank boyishness.

"Your brother has been most kind to me," he said with gentle appreciation. "It is a great thing to so find a friend when one is quite alone in a strange world!"

Jean Marie at once protested his own willingness to assist in this aid were his help required. Carvahal, who lived largely by intuition, knew instantly that the words were well enough meant and divined that his pose was successful. He went further.

"Now that—now that you two brothers have found each other again, I shall see less of my friend, eh?" He went on, ignoring Raoul's gesture of swift protest at such a thought. "It will not be long, however. Soon I shall be in England, a sad country, I hear. And you?"

"We?" said Jean Marie, a little puzzled by the question.

"Why, I thought surely that my uncle will offer you the hospitality of his home if you should come to England," pursued Carvahal smoothly. He almost believed in this uncle of his. "It would be a pleasure to thus slightly repay the kindness of a friend."

And to his look Raoul smiled a response.

"Our plans are uncertain," said Jean Marie. "But I do not think we shall come to England, though we thank you."

A little more talk and they departed. Carvahal watched them walking across the deep courtyard toward the Rue St. Honoré, and then, seeing an incoming guest paying off a taxi driver at the door, darted out. He put a fifty-franc note into the driver's hand and indicated the two figures walking out.

"Follow discreetly. They may take a taxi out in the street."

The chauffeur nodded.

As Carvahal had anticipated, the two brethren did indeed take a taxicab and were driven straight out to Raoul's pension in the Avenue Victor Hugo. He observed, however, that they did not enter at the main doorway but by a small door set in the wall, no doubt a door to which the guests had night-keys, a service entrance. Carvahal dismissed his taxi a block distant, walked back, and on coming to the door, tried it. Though doubtless locked at night, since Paris locks up most carefully, it swung open to his hand, and he had glimpse of a narrow corridor with staircase spiraling upward at the far end.

For the fraction of an instant Carvahal hesitated, but he was used to following intuition, and it urged him on. Where any city-bred person of his years would have been daunted, he was not, though he knew well enough the tremendous risks involved. At the same time, this Jean Marie Delorte undoubtedly carried the diamonds on his person, and might at any time dispose of them. And Murray had not come—had not come!

Carvahal entered the passage and shut the door behind him.

Hunting lies in being swift at the moment, and he was swift. He ran along the corridor and up the spiral stairs, his eyes flitting about, taking in everything above and below and around. On the first floor up a closed door faced him, outside it a tray announcing that the *petit-déjeuner* had here been served for one. He mounted farther. Then suddenly, beneath him, heard the voice of Raoul Delorte.

"For the Rue de Lafayette? *Alors*, one must go underground, The Café Sadinet."

Somehow, by some trick he did not understand, he was caught. A door was at hand; he opened it, found an unoccupied room, slipped inside and left the door a little ajar, waiting for the two brothers to come up. Vainly. A door below him slammed. Chagrin seized him—and delight. It was their room below after all; perhaps a pair of rooms! Good thing he had not entered that room, though! He opened his door a little and heard a snatch of song from below in the voice of Jean Marie; then swift words.

"Make haste! Good. We are a little late for the table."

Footsteps, the slam of a door, silence. Carvahal emerged, all athrill with the hunting instinct. They had gone to luncheon, then. Excellent! There was just a chance that Jean Marie would have hidden those diamonds in his room. Overlook nothing. Murray had not come!

Stealing down the stairs again, Carvahal stopped at the door below, tried it, pressed it open. Here was a six-foot passage. On the right a door, open, showing a small bedroom with windows giving on the street.

Carvahal chose and chose amiss, for he closed the entrance door and slipped on into the larger room. And, next instant, he heard the outer door open again behind him, and a step in the little passage.

His heart leaped terribly. Trapped!

Swift as light, he darted across the room. A chair overturned. No matter! There was a big Norman wardrobe, a huge ancient thing, standing between the windows, doors open. He flew to it, darted in, pressed back against the clothes there, and jerked the doors shut. His hand flew to his knife, a long clasp-knife, hurriedly drew open the blade. He waited, breath tense.

"Name of a dog!" growled the voice of Raoul Delorte. "Some one slammed that door. Where are you, eh? —— that you are, I have you this time! Show up or I fire! And the chair overturned. Ah, ah, the wardrobe!"

Carvahal went cold as death. Then he drew himself up, every muscle tensed. Next instant the doors before him were seized and opened, and he looked into the muzzle of a pistol held in the hand of Raoul Delorte. Jean Marie was not here.

It was a frightful moment. Raoul saw the boy, recognized him, and his eyes went wide with astounded incredulity. For an instant he was stupefied with sheer unbelief, must have thought himself mad. And in this instant the boy leaped.

One hand struck away the pistol, which fell, unfired, to the floor. With the other the knife struck. The blade drove home and drew clear again as Raoul staggered sideways and fell heavily, wordless, the life riven out of him in that one desperately frantic blow.

"One day too soon," said Carvahal, and wiped his knife, then pocketed it.

Raoul Delorte had paid for his crime.

No stopping now. Jean Marie would come shortly to investigate his brother's delay. The boy darted across the room, looked back once at that still, silent figure, and then was out in the passage. Out to the spiral stairs beyond. Everything quiet, no alarm. He went down the stairs very swiftly, and so out to the street door, and sunlight greeted him.

Chance again. A taxi was crawling toward him along the curb. It was the same taxi he had caught at the hotel, and the driver recognized him instantly, hoping perhaps for another fifty-franc billet. Probably the vehicle had gone cruising to the Bois and back. Carvahal went to it and nodded to the driver.

"Back to the hotel," he said.

No sooner had he sunk back on the cushions than he realized his frightful, horrible error. Little as he knew of civilization, he knew enough to comprehend this.

A murder would be reported at the pension in the Avenue Victor Hugo. Good. This driver would know that the time coincided to a minute; he would report the fifty-franc note, the order to follow the two men, the reappearance of the boy from that very pension. Nothing on earth could save Carvahal now, and he realized it with sickening clarity.

He sat wide-eyed, staring at his certain fate, a mortal pallor overspreading his cheeks. He was lost now, lost beyond any redemption, for the swiftest flight would not avail him in the least. A knife in the back of this taxi chauffeur. No! That was beyond him. He could kill in fair fight, he could face pistol with knife and slay, as he had just done; that was all right; it was the code by which he had lived there in the islands. But not murder.

No, everything was useless. No power on earth could save him now, no power on earth.

The vehicle swayed suddenly, swayed far to one side. Carvahal was flung across the cab, heard a tremendous crash, a splintering shatter of glass. Darkness descended upon him swiftly.

IX

EVERY Parisian chauffeur on approaching a cross street without a controlling gendarme drives in a certain mechanical and unvarying fashion. He looks not to right or left. He listens, he toots his long, slender hand-horn, he puts on speed and trusts to luck. To the passenger it seems an impossible risk at times, yet though on occasion there be profanity and grinding of brakes and a scraped fender, the risk is justified except once in ten thousand times. Carvahal's driver was the ten thousandth, the exception.

Not a crimson Renault had been approaching on the right, but a swift and silent monster, a Hispano-Suiza, whose speed was all too easily miscalculated. It struck squarely. The weighty chassis lifted the light taxicab bodily, flung it sidewise into an iron lamp-post, and then collapsed on three feet as one of the front tires went off with a tremendous bang.

In few cities of the world does a street crowd collect more swiftly or with less excuse than in Paris, but here was excuse enough and to spare. As was poetically just, the driver of the Hispano escaped without a scratch. He was an athletic young South American millionaire, and his comments upon the accident were vastly admired by the throng until he realized that damage was done. Then he fell to work, others aiding. The taxi driver, flung straight upon the iron lamp standard, was hauled out with broken neck. The gendarmes arrived just as Carvahal was brought from the ruins, unconscious, a nasty dark line across his forehead where an edge of broken glass had ripped.

Carvahal's first impression was of a myriad of gendarmes and such a clamor of talk as he had never heard before, even from port coolies or Sakalava fishermen. A portion of the crowd was vitally interested in him, another portion as interested in the millionaire and the others were explaining loudly how the accident had happened, while all impartially cursed the ambulance service. Loudest of all rose the voice of the South American, beseeching every one to inspect his beautiful car.

Somehow the miracle had happened. When his eyes fell on the body of the driver at his side Carvahal knew in a flash that he was saved, even before he could recall the necessity of such a miracle. He was too dazed to remember why, but the miracle had happened. He tried to sit up, and a dozen hands shoved him back. A gendarme bent over him.

"It is not for your eyes, *mon enfant.* Do not look!"

As his head cleared, Carvahal remembered everything. He wanted only to get away now. But no. Water and bandages arrived, a doctor worked over his injured head. Wild shouts and a clanging bell announced the ambulance. In vain did Carvahal protest and threaten, swear and gesticulate, until at length he kicked free of every one and got on his feet.

More argument, more persuasion and still more argument. Here was excitement tremendous, unwonted! Gendarmes protested, citizens protested, Carvahal protested. Having the luck to draw a laugh with one of his Malagasy oaths, he gained a hearing. In the end he had his way. Carvahal was permitted to go in a taxi to his hotel, with a gendarme to help him, while the Argentine millionaire explained everything volubly, except why he had stepped on the gas at the wrong instant.

Eventually, with a stupefying headache and another doctor dressing his hurt, Carvahal found himself bedded in his own hotel room. When the doctor departed with the gendarme, Carvahal rose and dressed. He had just finished when an official arrived to take his evidence. A kindly official, as much interested personally in Carvahal as in the case under investigation. For this was Paris, where there is time for all things.

The kindly official questioned; Carvahal showed his papers and replied in detail. Yes, he was just from Zanzibar; his uncle was coming from England to meet him shortly. Yes, the taxi? The same he had taken at the hotel? Yes, the same. Carvahal was glad to get away from family topics. He had driven to the Eiffel Tower, beneath it, back across the river, up to the Arc de Triomph, and had just started back to the hotel when the accident took place at the corner of the boulevard. Who was to blame? He could not say. He had been in dream about the glories of France, the flame licking yellow there under the great arch, thoughts of the nameless body there buried.

Carvahal presently became very weary of the official, for he was forced to go over everything three times. This did not worry him, since he was an adept liar, but he was anxious to visit Cook's and see if any word had come from Murray. He had left word there of his hotel address, but messages would not be forwarded. At length the official gathered up his portfolio with many shakings of the hand, and Carvahal sighed in utter relief. He ordered a bite to eat sent to his room and enjoyed it thoroughly. The doctor had not stitched up the cut across his head. Carvahal preferred a scar to stitches in his face, and the bandages were copious, but he managed to stretch a traveling-cap over them. He was about to leave the room when a knock sounded at the door. Carvahal stuffed the hat into his pocket, sank into a chair, called a weak command to enter and a page appeared.

"A M. Delorte is below, monsieur."

Carvahal's assumed look of suffering became a real look of alarm.

"I will come down," he said. "You will kindly explain to my friend the accident I have encountered. I will be down shortly."

The page disappeared. Carvahal lighted a cigaret and pondered. Presently he left the room and started below. He dared not refuse to see Jean Marie.

The slaying of Raoul, obviously, had not yet been discovered by the police, else Jean Marie would never be here. He would be undergoing official inquisition. Carvahal felt himself in no actual danger. There was no reason for Jean Marie to suspect him and, even in such case, he was safe enough in the hotel *entresol* from any violence. What did the man want? This question drew Carvahal, wakened all his curiosity.

As the boy came down the last stairs into the hotel lobby, walking slowly and conveying a most alarming impression of his condition, he saw Delorte standing there, listening with a grim air to the page. Delorte turned as Carvahal approached, and was very restrained.

"A terrible accident," said the boy. "Fancy, all in a moment! And the driver killed, slain outright! Horrible."

Carvahal managed a tear, having learned the trick from an Arab, and sank into his wicker chair in apparent exhaustion.

Yet, though he still played the game, under those penetrating dark eyes he felt an inner conviction of its futility. Somehow Jean Marie was no longer deceived. There was a fixity in the dark gaze, a stern cruelty in the lips which expressed the truth. At the same time Delorte could no more accuse the boy of his brother's death than Carvahal could accuse him of having stolen the diamonds. They were at an *impasse*.

"Death has been busy today," said Delorte as he seated himself.

Carvahal realized that Delorte must have discovered the dead Raoul and had then left the pension with all speed. He might possibly be accused of slaying Raoul, true. In fact, it was most probable. At all costs, however, he must rid himself of those diamonds, before he became tangled up in the official investigation; after, he would have no chance. Why had he stopped here, then, at such a moment? Undoubtedly Jean Marie had discovered the identity of the murderer. That was the only explanation possible to Carvahal's eyes.

In this the boy forgot the sort of man with whom he was dealing.

"And what, monsieur," he inquired, "do you wish of me?"

"You know," said Jean Marie, looking at him with steady eyes.

Carvahal shook his head.

"I regret I do not know. I can not remember. This accident has unnerved me. We did not have a rendezvous? When they said M. Delorte was below, I supposed it must be your good brother. Had I, perhaps, made an appointment with him?"

A thin smile touched the lips of Jean Marie, though his hands were hard clenched. He was fully master of himself. Now he spoke slowly, steadily, his air of perfect composure lending the words deep significance.

"A murderer makes one mistake, nearly always," he said. "Sometimes he leaves behind him a clue. If he is a novice, however, he makes a more common error. He does not always make sure of his victim."

Cold sweat started on Carvahal's forehead. Was it possible? Had he, then, made the same mistake that Raoul had made back there at Nosi Mitsio?

"I am afraid I do not comprehend," he murmured with a blank gaze.

Delorte smiled.

"Very good work, my little one. At the same time useless. He told me everything. In consequence, you fool me no longer. I know all!"

The boy stiffened. So Raoul had not been dead, after all! Well, what of it? Jean Marie dared nothing here. Braggadocio rose in Carvahal, and to his lips a cool, insolent laugh. He abruptly abandoned all his pretense, and resolved to meet his accuser on a man's level.

"Very well," he said, and lighted a cigaret with an air of negligent impudence. "You know everything. Good! Then hand me over those Soronho diamonds, and you may depart."

Somehow the impudence failed of its effect. Into the eyes of Delorte swept an exultant gleam, and the man rose to his feet.

"So!" he said curtly, looking down with angry gaze. "So. I thought so! There could be only you, boy or no boy. Thank you for the admission. I hoped you, being a good liar, would fall to a lie. Well, you are safe here, for the moment. But wait, young ——, wait! You will pay soon enough for today's murder."

So saying, Delorte turned, strode away and passed out from the hotel.

For a long moment Carvahal sat there, absolutely stunned, until the cigaret burned his fingers and he dropped it with an oath, only half suppressed. An Englishwoman who understood French turned and stared at him in stupefied horror, but little the boy cared.

Tricked by that man! The shame of it burned him. He was furious beyond words and so bitterly chagrined that he bit his lip until it pained to keep back a gusty storm of curses. For Delorte had deliberately trapped him, bluffed him into an admission! To Carvahal this was worse than any physical punishment.

At length he came to his feet, stretched the cap over his bandaged head and strode over to the reception clerk at the door.

"Monsieur wishes something?"

"Have a taxi called up, if you please."

Carvahal had remembered something, something extremely important.

X

"FOR the Rue de Lafayette?" Raoul had said, his last words to his brother in life. "*Alors*, one must go underground—"

Jean Marie Delorte went underground.

Since the crown jewels of Russia were sold, they have changed the *venue* of the Parisian curb market for jewels. In other days the merchants and agents used to crowd out from the cafés into the street in order to get full daylight on their purchases. This tended to blockade the street and it also gave undue publicity to the offered stones. Unfortunate in both ways, from the view of police and merchants.

Consequently, another café has been found to cater for this business, as a certain café in the Avenue Marigny caters for the merchants from the near-by open air postage-stamp *bourse*. Free, this one, from all official or officious attention, and boasting in the rear a capacious little walled garden where one may examine at pleasure in an excellent light the glittering precious offerings.

This curb is no place for tourists. It is one of the few places in Paris where the tourist is unknown and undesired, and the fraternity is practically closed to outsiders. In pockets of dingy, shabby clothes may be carried jewels worth millions. Men with hawk-like faces—the keen Levantine, Armenian, Russian traders who have flocked into Paris since the war—are in the ascendancy, and mingling with them the more alert if less openly suspicious agents of big jewelers and of private persons whose identity can be guessed only by the offerings displayed. There is more than one reason for uncrowned kings flocking to Paris.

However, if one has something better than the average for disposal, one may always find the right party to handle affairs or an introduction to the "inside." What comes to the Rue de Lafayette comes cheaply, as a rule, though it does not go cheaply, since the vendor wants cash and not publicity. The man who brought thither the Soronho diamonds was no exception to this rule.

Until he found the dead body of Raoul lying before the open wardrobe, Delorte had been disposed to wait, to offset one dealer with another, and obtain as close as possible the full market value, probably twenty per cent. of the whole, if he were lucky. But now all this was changed.

At any moment Delorte knew he might be haled off for all the torturing, unhastening inquisition which would follow the discovery of Raoul's body. It was now a case of selling the stones to the first buyer who would approximate a reasonable figure. He must get rid of the things at once. In the middle of the afternoon, as Delorte entered the Café Sadinet one perceived that his normal assurance and military swagger had somewhat lessened. Security had departed from him.

In this place of many deals is the usual bar and, fronting the bar, a plenitude of little tables bounded on three sides by leather-covered settees, in all respects a normal Parisian café. Between the bar and the end of the settee farthest from the entry is a gap leading to a rear door. This gives access to the garden, where are more little tables and chairs, well occupied in fair weather.

Delorte, entering, went straight through to the garden. His announcements had been made previously, and within an hour or so, given that much time, he should be able to conclude his deal when his men arrived. He came to the garden, halted and looked about.

The place was nearly empty. Three men were chattering at one table. At another sat a man alone, poring over the columns of *L'Intran*, the newspaper concealing his face from sight. Delorte took another table, ordered a *Rossi sec* and cursed softly to himself. None of these was any of the dealers he had met. He was early, of course, but an impatient man discounts the value of time on the wrong side of the ledger.

From his pocket Delorte took a little leathern bag, bulging curiously, and laid it on the table before him. This betrayed his nervousness. Such little bags, too, were not rare objects here, but they usually marked the novice. Most of the dealers carried their stocks loose in pockets of wash-leather, specially contrived for this business, or in pocket-books of many compartments. Then Delorte waited again, drumming on the table with his fingers as he eyed his bright scarlet drink and cursed the late arrivals.

The solitary man at the other table folded up his *Intransigeant* very carefully and put it in his pocket. He rose, he lighted a cigaret, he sauntered over as if to pass Delorte's table. Very swiftly he turned, caught the leathern bag from the table and pocketed it in one flashing movement, then stood motionless, smiling a little as Delorte started upright.

This man was Murray.

For a moment Jean Marie Delorte was absolutely petrified as he stood staring into those cool, smiling eyes and recognized the healthily brown face of this man whom he had thought dead. No ghost, however. This man was alive. Somehow Raoul had bungled. Upon Delorte rushed the conviction that he was doomed; one by one his fine schemes had been smashed down. A frightful anger overwhelmed him, anger at that dead brother of his, whose inefficiency had brought in train all this disaster! Everything had been wasted: sacrifice of honor, of position, time and money—everything!

Delorte, wide-eyed, whipped hand to pocket, slid out his pistol, fired.

With the movement, however, Murray lunged forward. His left hand met the wrist of Delorte and gripped into it with fingers of iron, wrenched it aside, deflected the bullet so that there came a tinkling of window-glass by the door leading into the café. An instant the two men stood thus while the table toppled over. The three men at the near-by table uttered a simultaneous yell to frighten. They jumped for the café entrance, encountered the waiter, toppled him backward and burst away inside for safety.

A blow in the face and Delorte went backward with that cramping grip still on his wrist. Then he wakened, roused himself, dropped the useless weapon, which went hurtling a dozen feet away, and fought. And how he fought! The two figures sent tables and chairs crashing to the gravel in their furious career; Delorte struck and lashed out viciously, terribly, frantically, a raving madman for the time being. Yet if he was a madman, Murray was something more—an agent of justice.

And Murray beat him back, tore free of his grip, swept into him with terrific blows. Once more Delorte managed to grapple. In the street outside, in the café, was a whirlwind of noisy commotion, men shouting for gendarmes, but none daring to come into the garden and help this client who wrestled with an armed lunatic. One figure alone evinced desire to get out to the garden—that of a boy, head bandaged. Carvahal had arrived.

Another crash. Delorte tripped over a chair, went backward and came heavily to earth, Murray with him. They rolled over, then Murray came on top, put hand to throat, exerted his strength. Delorte flung out his hands, groping, groping ever more weakly.

Gendarmes had arrived in the café now, but the boy was ahead of them. Carvahal darted through the crowd, ducked a restraining arm, flung himself out into the garden. The bandage had been swept from his head with the cap in this struggle, and his cut brow was bleeding again. He ran forward, and Murray, secure in victory, looked up to see that red-smeared face.

Murray was struck motionless with astounded horror at the sight.

Beneath him, the groping hand of Delorte came upon a forgotten object—the fallen pistol. His fingers seized it. A terrible cry of fear and warning burst from

Carvahal, but it was too late. Delorte twisted up the pistol, shoved it against Murray's side and fired. The report was dull, muffled. Murray toppled sidewise.

Carvahal kicked the pistol away. Too late again. He would have hurled himself upon Delorte, but he had no chance. A gendarme was ahead of him. As Delorte half rose, pistol in hand, the gendarme drew his own weapon and fired deliberately. It is not for nothing the Paris police carry automatics.

"*Voilà!*" said the gendarme dramatically as Delorte crumpled up. "That madman murdered his own brother today in the Avenue Victor Hugo. We trailed him there. Good! It is finished."

It was finished, indeed.

XI

IN A large double room at the Hotel St. James, Murray and Carvahal sat across a little table, and between them lay the leather bag, now sadly torn, and a heap of pebbles.

"I had no time to reach you. Got here late this morning," said Murray. "I went straight to that café had a bite of lunch and waited. You know the rest. I'm afraid some of those stones are badly damaged."

Carvahal, playing with the pebbles, laughed a little.

"Who cares! Look." From the heap, he pulled a fragment of distorted lead. "That's worth all the cursed stones put together, so. But for the stones, you'd be dead this minute. I owe them something, for saving your life!"

Murray lighted a cigaret and smiled.

"Right. I don't understand, though, why Delorte was called a madman. Those gendarmes said he had murdered his brother. What happened?"

"Why, I'll tell you about that another time," said Carvahal. With a gesture of distaste, he pushed the pebbles away from him. "They feel like soap, little stones that cost lives!"

"Exactly, son. They cost the lives of men in Lourenço Marques before ever I met you. One of those lives was a precious one. That of a friend whose passing I grudged. He was a fine man, this friend of mine, and these stones belonged to him."

"You mean Soronho?" queried the boy. Murray nodded.

"Your father."

Carvahal's eyes narrowed.

"How do you know it?" he demanded swiftly. "Is there proof?"

"No proof and every proof," said Murray. "There are no documents, papers, testimony the courts would recognize. No. But Soronho was my friend. His son was left as a child with a Doctor Carvahal, who vanished at Delagoa Bay. For the rest, you yourself are the proof." He pushed the heap of stones back toward the boy. "Some of the best are ruined, but enough remains for you. They are not mine, but yours, son."

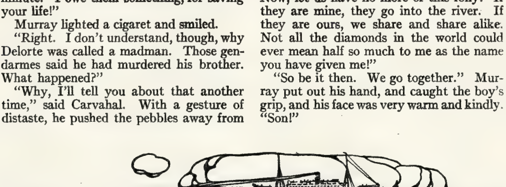
Carvahal leaned his elbows on the table and looked into the eyes of Murray.

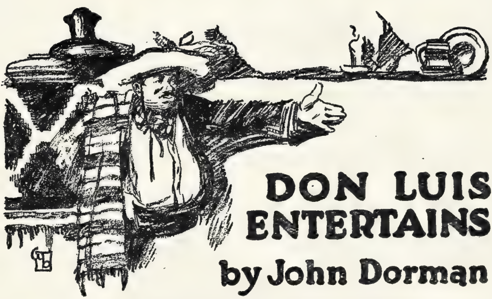
"When I was a friendless waif and you caught me aboard your ship stealing, what did you do? You showed me to the crew as your son. Was there not a pact made between us? The francs were not mine, but ours. So also with the stones. They belong to neither of us, but to both."

"They are yours," said Murray.

"Good. Then I shall take them to the Pont Neuf and drop them into the Seine. Now, let us have no more of this folly! If they are mine, they go into the river. If they are ours, we share and share alike. Not all the diamonds in the world could ever mean half so much to me as the name you have given me!"

"So be it then. We go together." Murray put out his hand, and caught the boy's grip, and his face was very warm and kindly. "Son!"





DON LUIS ENTERTAINS

by John Dorman

Author of "The War Cats of Dugan O'Day," "Intrigue Mexican," etc.

HA, SEÑORES, a thousand pardons! *Sangre de Dios*, do you receive all visitors at the point of a pistol?

Madre, what a welcome! Had you by chance come to the house of Don Luis Ynclan he would have said—

"Enter, *caballeros*, this poor house is your own."

That is better—much! It annoys me to have pistols pointed at me, and any man in Nuevo Laredo will tell you that an Ynclan is not one with whom it is well to trifle.

Carramba, am I not the grandson of the famous Don Luis Ynclan, and named for him? He, too, was a very brave man, señores. *Dios*, did he not laugh in the faces of all General Scott's great army at Brownsville on the day that army was put to flight by a mule? I—

But again many pardons. Is not this the house of my very good friend Juan Urrutia? He whose blind daughter sells pecan candy across the river in Laredo? The old Juan, crippled in his arms? He is deaf as a post, too, which is why I entered without knocking, as he had told me to do.

And you were just going out, señores? I am abjectly sorry that I have intruded and detained you. I but wished to warn old Juan that the rangers—may they suffer a million years in purgatory—are —

But you would not be interested in the affairs of old Juan Urrutia. His is the next house, perhaps? *Carramba*, but how is a man to tell one house from the next, when each is but a hole in a 'dobe wall?

Adios, then—what?

Señor, take your hand from that gun! You can see that I am unarmed, and have I not told you that a Don Ynclan is dangerous? My soul to ——, do you think the man lives who can keep Luis Ynclan where he would not stay or send him where he will not go, any more than all Scott's army could keep my grandfather when he said to them, "*Vaya con Dios!*" and swam across the river? Ah, he was just such a man as I. Tall, handsome, proud, and very fearless. He—

The rangers? Why, they have at last discovered the joke old Juan played upon them! My soul, but it was time! Every unshod dog of a peon has been laughing at them for months enough! Yes, they have found him out, and tonight they are planning to bundle him up with some of his opium and take him down to the river, a mile or so above the town.

There a small boat shall be waiting. In it they shall place old Juan and his opium, and one ranger shall go across to see that Juan doesn't throw the dope—that is the right word, is it not?—overboard. *Madre*, it is funny! But for Juan it is very sad.

On the American shore more rangers

shall be waiting who shall capture poor Juan. And they shall report, with their tongues in their cheeks, that they came upon two men landing drugs, but that one of them unfortunately escaped. Are they not dogs, those rangers?

But I am keeping you here with my woman's talk. I beg—

What, you would hear more of Juan and his doings? *Dios*, I thought that only the rangers and the revenue men had not heard of them by now! But you three, being *Yanquis*, would not have known so easily. So listen, señores, and prepare to laugh!

Surely you have seen Dolores, Juan's daughter who is blind, with her tray of Mexian pecan candy over in the plaza at Laredo? No? Well, for more than a year she has gone across the bridge night and morning. Dolores of the Green Beads she is called by every one, because always she wears a string of enormous glass beads.

She is a very beautiful girl, *caballeros*, and her mother also was beautiful, although too generous with her love, but Dolores is blind and no man comes to buy her from her father. *Por Dios*, I do not think he would have taken a marriage settlement of less than many thousand dollars!

She carried the opium, you see. Ha, it is funny! Every morning she goes down to the bridge with her candy. A Mexican soldier leads her out to the middle of the bridge, and an American soldier comes to get her. Then she goes to the plaza, and the police help her across the street. Ha!

At noon she goes to the house of her aunt, near-by, for her lunch and her *siesta*. Because her great beads are glass, even though very dark, so as to be opaque and heavy, she removes them when she goes to sleep. Her aunt takes them, leaves another pair in their place, and Dolores is none the wiser! *Carramba*, is it not a good joke that the bridge guards and police should help smuggle in the opium?

Only yesterday an automobile brushed into her, señores, spilling her candy every way and knocking her down. Very unfortunately for my good friend Juan, the driver of the automobile was a ranger. He picked her up and placed her in the automobile to take to the hospital. Then he noticed her beads, many of them broken, lying on the pavement, and he put them in his pocket very quickly. Was it not too bad?

When she recovered—she was hardly scratched—the ranger told her that the beads had fallen down a sewer opening and that not even one of them was left. She wept very much, but her father was able to find her another string exactly the same. I do not think he had to look very hard! And this morning when she crossed the bridge she was arrested, very quietly.

Madre, was it not a most excellent joke old Juan had on the *Yanquis?* My soul to —— one would think they would split their sides with laughing! But no, señores! They have no sense of humor, as we Spaniards have. They are angry at Juan, and when they find out that he never comes across the river they decide to take him across. A thousand curses on such meddlers!

Por Dios, it is well for them that they have to do only with crippled old Juan and not with such men as myself and my grandfather, who is these many years with the saints in paradise, else the priests have lied to me. Enough gold I have paid them so that he should be on the right hand of God himself!

He was a man and a soldier! As brave, even, and as wise and cunning as am I, his grandson. He was a captain under Santa Anna, and I was a corporal in a labor battalion in the late war. *Ay de mi*, how often have I wished he might have lived to see how proudly I have borne both his name and his traditions!

On the day that the mule routed the army at Brownsville my grandfather came across the river from Matamoros to challenge the great Scott to a duel, the winner of which should decide how much territory north of the Rio Grande belonged to Mexico. Why need so many die, argued my brave grandsire, when two men alone could settle it? Also, it is true, he wanted to find out how many men were in the enemy's camp.

So he found a little boat and set out. In all Mexico, señores, there was no man brave enough to go as his friend to see the friends of Scott and arrange the matter. He took with him his pistols and sword, and was dressed in his finest uniform.

Very unfortunately, *caballeros*, there was in the bottom of the boat several holes which had not seemed large enough to be feared. But water poured in through them rapidly, and when my grandfather was hardly more than half way across the river the boat sank suddenly. He had laid aside his hat and jacket to row, so they as well as his weapons were lost. But he was a very brave man, so he swam on toward the enemy's camp.

Soldiers were gathered in great numbers by the river bank, señores, and they were watching something so earnestly that my greatsire came ashore without so much as being noticed. At first he was minded to command some private soldier to take him at once to General Scott. It may be well to say that he, like myself, spoke English with the greatest ease and skill. However, he—

My soul to ——, must you continually interrupt? Have I not told you that I overheard the rangers plotting what they would do to Juan? What care I for the hour and minute of their arrival? Is not Luis Ynclan above such finite things? And—

What? Yes, they did mention other men they might take as well, but since it seems they are *Americanos* I was not interested. They are three in number, as I remember it, and the men for whom Juan works. Also they do not cross the river at all.

Their names I do not remember, yet I believe there was one ranger who described them to another. One of the three he said was short, fat and red of face. Another was slender, with a hooked nose and close set eyes. The third was tall and big, with very little hair. But of what use are descriptions? Why, those three of whom the rangers spoke might well be you three, and that is absurd, is it not?

And I recall, now that I think of it, that the ranger said one man was named Big Bill, one Pete Arliss and one Jones. I—

Señor, return that pistol to your pocket before I forget myself. Three times, *Yanqui*, have I taken away a man's pistol and shot him with it. Four times have I taken the weapon and, with its sharp foresight, made on the owner's forehead the gun cross of infamy, laying open the flesh to the bone and burning powder in the scratch.

And I would advise, señor, that you file off the sight on your weapon. Some day you may draw the gun on a man who is not as patient as I am, and he will take it away from you and thrust it down your throat. Undoubtedly the sight would hurt extremely.

As I was saying, my grandfather stood there on the river bank unnoticed. The whole army, *caballeros*, was gathered in a great horseshoe with the open part of the shoe on the bank. In the very center of this a mule was grazing quietly on a picket rope.

Then men came out toward the mule, bearing a queer sort of pack saddle and a small howitzer. Yes, a little cannon! My grandfather was interested at once.

The men fitted the cannon on the mule's back, and she kept right on eating. Meantime my greatsire learned from the talking of the men about him that several of the guns had been carried to Brownsville on pack mules without any occasion to try them in battle. Since my ancestor had lost his hat and military jacket there was little to mark him, of course, so he mingled freely with the enemy soldiers.

Finally some one wanted to know if the howitzers could be fired from the back of the mules, so they picked out the most peaceable mule to try it on. She stood very quietly while they were loading the gun, too. Without doubt she was a very lazy animal, without proper spirit.

Then, señores, trouble arose! No man among all that throng wanted to pull the lanyard! A fine thing, was it not? There was the gun, pointing out over the mule's back toward Matamoros, all ready for firing, and none would pull the lanyard for fear of what the mule might do!

My grandfather almost strode forward to do it, but a man can't well fire on his own countrymen! So he listened while some spoke of tying a long cord to the lanyard and other methods. At last he shouted in a great voice, like mine—

"Attach a fuse, gunners, then stand back!"

And, *caballeros*, they fixed the fuse as he ordered. He was, as I am, accustomed to commanding men. They lighted it, and all sprang away very hurriedly. My—

What? No, that was not a knocking at the door. Only some drunken peon stumbling along the sidewalk. What can you expect when it is hardly two feet wide?

Z-z-z-z-z-z-z-snap—snap, went the fuse, hissing and crackling after the manner of all fuses, and every one watched.

Then, *Dios!* That mule! She turned her head around to investigate. And because the fuse was up over her withers she could not see it, so she twisted her body around and around.

And that gun! It had pointed once at Mexico, but almost from the moment the fuse was lighted no man could say where next the howitzer would point.

Now this way, now that way. For a moment it would point at the men on one side, and to them it doubtless looked far larger than the great guns of the last war. Then it would be swung around to cover the men on the other side, and they also saw sudden death grinning at them. *Carramba*, what a scrambling!

Señores, they ran, they shouted, they swore, they fought. Great hundreds of men, packed tightly together, all trying each to get behind the other!

Around and around went the mule, for always the fuse snapped and sputtered, and she could not understand. Away went the men, seeking low places, and the lowest of all was the river. In they went, droves of brave soldiers fleeing in panic because of a curious mule! And those who were too far away to reach the water threw themselves down on their bellies and wiggled away like snakes! Ha!

My grandfather—

What? You want to know how I found out so much about the rangers? Well, señores, I—

But look, *caballeros*, at that window. Ha! Yes, your eyes are very good, and the black things you see pushing away the burlap are pistol barrels in the hands of rangers who can shoot. At the rear window there are two more. Ha!

The knocking you heard was to warn me that all was ready. The rangers, you see, are too courteous to interrupt a good story. Ha!

As I was saying, my grandfather strolled with becoming speed to the water and swam across leisurely, laughing with great delight. The gun went off, eventually, and the ball fell harmlessly in the river. My grandfather looked back, and saw that the mule continued grazing. He was a man of great resourcefulness, my greatsire, even as I am.

When we had this evening talked with Juan and he had told us he expected you gentlemen to call on him, my captain said to me:

"My brave Luis, we must have help to accomplish this matter. If you can entertain those gentlemen for thirty minutes I think I can arrange for Juan to have company."

"By what method shall I amuse them, my Captain?" I asked. "That is, if it matters."

"Tell them about your brave grandfather," he replied, "but take your gun along."

So, *caballeros*, I set out, but in the darkness I slipped and fell. I arose and had gone some distance when I noticed the gun had fallen from my waist band. *Dios!* was it not a shame? But I am a brave man, and I knew that if I had need of a gun I could take it from one of you. Also I had no time to look for the lost weapon.

And another time, señores, you will know what follows when Don Luis entertains.

"I'LL BE A HARDY CAPTAIN"

by Noel H. Stearn

I'LL be a hardy captain
  And my men'll number five—
Jack and Buck and Pedrico
  And Squnt and handsome Clive.

Jack'll be a seafarin' lad
  With crumpled fingernails,
With a waddle to his walkin'
  And a deep voice full o' tales.

And Buck'll be a nigger,
  Six foot two from heels to crinkles,
With green jewels in his ear lobes
  And a forehead rough with wrinkles.

And Squnt'll be a cockney cuss,
  A hearty scrappin' lad,
A swearin' when the goin's good
  And pluggin' when it's bad.

And Pedrico—oh, Pedrico
  He'll be from Madagascar
With a Malay for a mother
  And his dad a knifin' Lascar.

A hell-cat of a half-breed,
  Fearless, furtive, fast, and quiet,
With a love for all his comrades
  And two daggers to stand by it.

And Clive'll have big, wistful eyes
  And muscles like a god,
With his gizzard full o' music
  And a girl at every nod.

And we'll go a roamin' round the world
  From hell to a London dive—
Old Jack, and Buck, and Pedrico,
  And Squnt, and me and Clive.

Clive'll love pale sunsets
  And Jack'll love the sea
And Pedrico his daggers
  And Squnt a gay mêlée.

And that whoppin' big buck nigger
  Won't love nothin' else but me
And a stinkin' blinkin' marmoset
  That squats upon his knee.

But I'll love Clive's pale sunsets
  And Jack's pet little sea
And Pedro's filigreed daggers
  And Squnt's gay fightin' glee

And Buck's wee squintin' marmoset
  And everything else alive—
And Jack and Buck and Pedrico
  And Squnt and handsome Clive.

A frolic or a fortune
  It'll be all the same to us,
A battle on a mountain peak
  Or a little Bowery fuss.

It'll be Hindustan or Maui
  On the rollin' of the dice,
And a-quarrelin' with the natives
  Or a-treatin' of them nice.

"I'll Be A Hardy Captain," copyright, 1926, by Noel H. Stearn.

We'll wander to the Arctic
  And we'll tame a polar bear.
And Pedro'll carve some cross-bones
  On the pole while we are there.

And Squnt'll fight the Eskimos
  And wish we had a blizzard,
But Clive'll let Aurora
  Pull some singin' from his gizzard.

We'll jump the bloody ice-floes
  From Kamchatka clear to Nome,
And Buck'll cuddle his marmoset
  And wish that we was home.

So we'll go to fight the bushmen
  In the wilds o' Borneo—
And if we like 'em pretty good
  We'll up and fight their foe.

And Buck'll chase the monkey,
  And Jack'll sweat and swear,
And Clive won't pull the orchids
  'Cause they look so pretty there.

We'll ship to Khara Khoto
  On a dromedary's deck
And we'll dig up some old Tartar king
  With jade around his neck.

And Squnt'll slap him on the back
  And call him epithets,
And Pedrico, he'll filch the jade
  While Jack's a-makin' bets.

But Buck'll hug his marmoset
  And roll a restless eye
Till Clive says, "Bury him again.
  "He's seen a desert sky."

We'll float the Orinoco
  And we'll cross the Soho Nor.
We'll trip up the Himalayas
  Just to make the Afghans sore.

We'll go a roamin' round the world,
  Will Jack, and Buck, and I,
And Squnt, and Clive and Pedrico,
  And then one day I'll die.

Jack'll wrap me in his oilskin
  For to dump me in his sea,
And Buck'll hug his marmoset
  And wish that it was me.

And Squnt'll swear and swagger
  And sing a cockney air
With a husk down in his gullet
  That ain't usually there.

And Pedrico, he'll slip the Tatar's jade
  Around my neck
And then practise throwin' his daggers
  At a knot-hole in the deck.

And the dusk will ooze smoked purple
  On green waves that spank the prow.
So Clive'll lift my face to it
  And say, "He's happy now."

And Buck'll pick my carcass up
  To chuck it in Jack's sea,
But Clive'll be the captain then,
  And the first he'll stare at me.

"Old Cap'll lead us yet," he'll say
  With a flitter in his eye.
"If he flops head first we sail for Kurst—
  "Feet first, it's ho for Skye."

A MANIFEST DESTINY

A Five-Part Story Part III

by Arthur D. Howden Smith

Author of "Porto Bello Gold," Swains Folly," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

IN THE early 'fifties San Francisco seemed civilization's ultimate camping-ground. People the world over were flocking to the city of gold. Transportation was difficult in those days; the Overland route was dangerous. The railroad across Panama was tedious and expensive. Most people preferred the canal and railway transit through Nicaragua.

The firm of Morgan and Garrison had wrested control of the Nicaragua transit from Commodore Vanderbilt, and Colonel William Walker, the famous Sonora filibuster, was about the town talking of the "manifest destiny" of the United States to annex Central American territory.

To this town came young Peter Corlaer Ormerod of the New York law firm of Ormerod and Van Ruysdyck, attorneys to the Commodore. He bore a warning and ultimatum from his client to Garrison.

He walked up to a cabby who was busily reading "Pickwick Papers."

"Take me to a good hotel," he said, "but first stop by at the offices of Garrison."

"Aha, Ormerod," said the cabby, and, looking up Ormerod recognized Fletcher Cabot, whom he had known at Harvard.

Fletcher drove Ormerod to Garrison's and was told to wait. The cabby called on Colonel Walker, advising him that Ormerod was at Garrison's, whither Walker immediately went. The filibuster arrived in the midst of a discussion between Ormerod and Garrison about the situation in Nicaragua. To Ormerod, it seemed from his discussion of the matter that Walker knew the history and situation there from beginning to end.

Walker took Ormerod to Duval's where he lived. There he introduced him to three of his aids: Tom Jenkins, the Viscount de Morbecque, and Captain von Ritterstein. Later Walker expelled two spies of the Nicaragua Legitimist Party from the bar at Duval's. These were an American and an Englishman, Spencer and Webster.

Walker and Ormerod went to dinner, where they met Don Jaime and Señorita de Avila, exiles from Nicaragua, nobles of the Democrat party, which Walker favored. Ormerod learned that Walker was preparing for a filibustering campaign in Nicaragua to colonize the state and reestablish the democratic party. Walker offered Ormerod a place on his staff.

"I cannot accept until I have completed my business for the Commodore," said the lawyer, "but after that I shall consider it."

That night Ormerod heard cries in the street, as if of some one attacked. Rushing to the vicinity of the shouting, he discovered that Spencer and Webster were attacking Don Jaime and the señorita. Before he could drive them off they managed to wound him in the shoulder, and to knock Don Jaime senseless.

They carried Don Jaime to his rooms and sent for Walker who treated his wounds. Along with his other accomplishments, Walker was no mean physician.

Shortly afterward Ormerod set Eastward by the Overland route.

"Will you write to me?" he asked the señorita before he left.

"Yes, my friend," she answered.

ON HIS way to New York he decided definitely that when he had closed his business with the Commodore he would join the force in Nicaragua. His resolution was strengthened when he arrived at home by a letter from the señorita.

"Cabot said that you should be one of us," it read, "I told him that *you were*."

Ormerod called on Vanderbilt to report, and tell him his resolution. He saw Spencer leaving the office.

"The man is a crook and a cheap murderer," he told the Commodore.

"He serves my purposes," answered Vanderbilt, "I am sending him to Nicaragua as a spy."

"I am going to Nicaragua, too," answered Ormerod, "but for a different reason." And he told the Commodore his plans.

Vanderbilt was pleased that the old adventurous blood of the Ormerods had come out in Peter. He believed it to show that the boy had some worth. Not so his partner Dick Van Ruysdyck and Dick's daughter Lydia. They were heart-broken, though Lydia, who was Ormerod's fiancée, did not show it.

At dinner that night at Lydia's there was much discussion of Walker's recent defeat at Rivas by the Legitimists. Ormerod met two Englishmen, one, Salmon, who sneered at Walker's enterprise, and for that matter, at every one and everything. The other was Henningsen, a soldier of fortune, who was anxious to join Walker.

After saying good-by to Lydia and his old house servant Nora, Ormerod set out for the pier to take passage South.

As he walked towards the dock a fireman came running after him calling:

"Misther Ormerod. Misther Ormerod. I hear ye're going ta Nicaragua. Take us with ye."

"I can't, Mike," said Ormerod. "But when I get there and find out how things are, I'll let you know, and you can come down."

"That's what meself will do then," Mike called after him. "Hurroo and hurray. Here's to war."

IT WAS a wet morning when Ormerod arrived at Greytown, Nicaragua. Greytown was the western port of the Transit Company and under the control of the British and the Legitimist party. As Ormerod got off the liner he encountered Jenkins and Cabot who were investigating the enemy port. They boarded another boat for the river route across country. At a stopping-off place Ormerod saved Cabot and Jenkins from being shot by a company of Legitimists under Spencer by pretending to be on the Commodore's business.

When they arrived at Virgin Bay they found horses ready to take them to Walker's headquarters at San Juan Del Sur.

Valle, a native colonel of lancers, rode up to them.

"Ah, Don Tomas," he said, "who ees zis?"

Jenkins told him.

"Welcome, Don Pedro," shouted the old man, "I am Valle, *coronel* of lancers. Zose who lofe me call me Chelon." He embraced Ormerod. "When I steek zem weet' my lance, zey go *pouf!* An' I am always ready for ze fon or ze spree."

They mounted their horses and rode to the filibuster camp. Ormerod saw Walker, and told him of recruiting possibilities in the east, and was made a captain on Walker's staff. As he came from the interview and into the headquarters bar he found Tom Jenkins very drunk. Jenkins tried to bully him but he pinned the Westerner's arms.

"Are you my friend or not, Tom?" he asked.

"If ye don't stand between me'n my likker, y'are," said Jenkins.

"Your liquor has nothing to do with it. If you're my friend you'll come and eat dinner with me. How about it?"

Jenkins went.

"How did you make out with the Colonel?" asked Cabot.

"Pretty well. He took me on the staff. Captain."

Cabot lifted his glass.

"Gentlemen," he cried, "I give you Captain Ormerod of the Staff."

They drank, bottoms up.

A WEEK later Walker informed Ormerod that they should advance on Granada, chief city of Nicaragua, immediately. He introduced him to Don Rafael Canedo, a cousin of the de Avilas and a democratic leader. Ormerod thought he detected a note of hostility in the Nicaraguan's manner.

After a forced march they attacked Granada. The move was totally unexpected by the Legitimists, and they captured the city without much loss. Walker ordered that there should be no looting. Cabot and Jenkins captured Webster, but Walker released and deported him on Ormerod's advice, lest the enmity of the spy's British countrymen be incurred.

IX

SWIFT, and ever swifter, trod the press of events. It was as if the capture of Granada had jarred into motion the meshed cogwheels of fate's machinery—as if some power beyond human compass had plucked up Walker and his men, and hurled them out into the void of destiny. And to Ormerod, at least, it seemed that clear-sighted, far-thinking as Walker was, he could not have anticipated so immediate, so stupendous success as his lightening blow now set in train for him.

The church lent him stout support; Padre Vigil preached and intrigued in favor of the compromise measures he advocated to bring the contending Democrats and Legitimists to terms. The municipal authorities of the city petitioned him to assume the presidency. The Granadinos, hating the Leonese, intolerant of Democratic influence, were quick to emphasize the authority of the Americans. The surviving Legitimist leaders were in prison, under guard in their own homes or like Estrada, the provisional president, in headlong flight into the wastes of Chontales, across the lake. The Democrats, for the present forgetting national jealousy, saluted the Americans as their saviors, and Walker, himself, as the country's foremost guardian.

Many a leader must have lost his head in that musky atmosphere of laudation and opportunity; but Walker refused to accept prematurely the power he secretly desired. He declined the presidency, suggesting, rather, that if General Corral or some other Legitimist should become chief executive, he, as commander-in-chief of the army, would undertake to preserve order, while a cabinet fairly representative of the two parties would inspire confidence in all quarters. He treated his prisoners considerately, held in check the rapacity and vengefulness of the Democrats and employed several prominent Legitimists to go with Minister Wheeler as commissioners to treat with Corral.

Corral, on the other hand, so soon as he heard of the loss of Granada, withdrew the bulk of his forces from Rivas and hastened north to join the troops at Masaya which covered Democratic Leon. His subordinate in Rivas seized Mr. Wheeler, when the American Minister presented himself, and kept him under guard for two days. From Corral the minister received a letter couched in insulting terms, refusing to be responsible for his safety and threatening to denounce him to the Administration at Washington for violation of neutrality. Minister Wheeler returned to Granada, rumbling as portentously as Ometepec in eruption; and so for a week affairs drifted in a miasma of confusion, misunderstanding, conflicting interests.

A black outlook for peace, apparently, yet shot with stray gleams of hope. October 13th had seen the Americans in Granada. On the 17th the California steamer *Uncle Sam* debarked at San Juan del Sur sixty volunteers for Walker, all armed and equipped, and hungry for a chance to prove their mettle. With them was a cavalier of fortune, one Parker H. French, an ill-omened rogue, notorious on the frontier for clever rascality and unprincipled originality. Hearing at San Juan of Walker's triumph at Granada, he suggested to his comrades that a fitting compliment to that exploit—as, likewise, a sure passport to Walker's favor—would be the seizure of San Carlos, the sole remaining Legitimist stronghold on the lake. And with entire recklessness of the consequences, the newcomers took passage on the lake steamer *Virgen*, which was transporting their civilian shipmates bound for Greytown and New York.

Off San Carlos they had the *Virgen* hove to, and sent ashore a message demanding the fort's surrender; but the answer of the Legitimist commander was to imprison the messengers, who were Transit employees, and open on the steamer from his batteries. French thought better of his enterprise, the *Virgen* was turned around and they steamed back to Virgin Bay with the hapless California passengers. Scarcely an hour later the passengers from the New York steamer, bound for California, came up the San Juan River, and were promptly fired into by the Legitimists. A woman and her baby were killed and a second child wounded before the *San Carlos* succeeded in running the batteries of the fort.

The captain of the *San Carlos*, uncertain of the situation at Virgin Bay, decided to convey the New York passengers to Granada. It was a good thing that he did so. French, after returning to Virgin Bay, had landed the California passengers there, and continued up the lake in the *Virgen* with his reinforcements for Walker. That evening, without any warning, a column of Legitimists from Rivas descended upon Virgin Bay, killed five of the Americans and wounded a score of others and plundered the rest and the Transit establishement. When they retired they carried with them Cushing, the superintendent of the Transit, who was held under threat of death for a ransom of two thousand dollars.

So far, the Legitimists had scored by this series of incidents. They had tied up the Transit route, which was Walker's jugular vein; and Walker's subordinates, acting without his knowledge, even before they had reported to him, had blundered sadly. But with the stern readiness which was one of his strongest characteristics, he exploited the success of his enemies in such a way as to transform an *impasse* into complete victory.

The news of the massacre at Virgin Bay reached Granada late at night on Sunday, October twenty-first, and Ormerod, as orderly officer at headquarters, was obligd to awaken his chief to pass it on to him. To the New Yorker it came as a blight upon the expedition's hopes; he foresaw the necessity of abandoning Granada and striking out anew to recover the Transit. But Walker, sitting up in bed, pale and worn from his exertions, heard the report with no indication of misgiving.

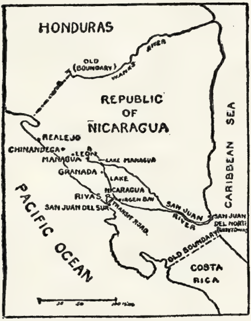
"Don Matteo Mayorga is in the custody of Mr. Wheeler, I believe," was his first comment.

Mayorga had been minister of Hacienda

in the Legitimist cabinet; he was one of the numerous prisoners of importance taken in the surprize of the city.

"Yes, sir."

"Send a file of *Falanginos* for him, with a written order from me to Mr. Wheeler. And notify Valle to have a firing squad of his men ready for duty in the Plaza at nine o'clock in the morning."



Ormerod mumbled a response, sick at heart.

"You don't like the prospect, Captain?" said Walker kindly. "That legalistic attitude of yours is at work again, I am afraid."

"Mayorga has had nothing to do with the Virgin Bay killings," returned Ormerod.

"Ah, but that is a humanitarian, not a legal, statement," answered Walker. "Technically, he is absolutely guilty, since he has been a member of the government which commissioned the officers responsible for the killings. And what is more important, sir, we have got to stop this whole bloody business." His lips tightened. "Mayorga, I intend, shall be a warning to his people. A flag shall go north in the morning with word of his death to Corral. I misjudge our antagonists if they do not sing another tune when they hear of it."

"Mayorga is one of their great men, yes," assented Ormerod. "But he is one man, not a cause."

"You forget the Latin mind," Walker remonstrated gently. "We hold other prisoners almost as important as Mayorga. Unless I am in error, Corral's daughters are still in Granada."

"But—" Ormerod was horror-struck.

"Of course, of course, Captain. You and I know they are as safe with us as though they lay in a convent. But Corral will judge us according to his own standards. An incorrigible failing most of us can never conquer, sir."

The effect of the execution was precisely what Walker had predicted. Corral was paralyzed by it. It was an argument based upon a logic the Nicaraguan understood, and it came with a bruskly dramatic touch that impressed the Latin temperament. Moreover, it was tinged with that unexpectedness which was the most terrifying aspect of Walker to his enemies. Four times, now, he had struck them, and on each occasion so as to take them by surprize. Who could have supposed he would attack Rivas with fifty-eight men—and escape? Why should he have been able to defeat four times his strength at Virgin Bay? As for Granada, only one in league with Satan could have contrived as he did to take the city! And who would have expected a man, who had refused to shoot a single prisoner in the heat of battle, to execute Mayorga on a few hours' notice?

Corral's resolution crumbled beneath the mallet of Walker's will. He, and all his party, were in consternation, fearful of what the American would do next. Their government was dispersed, their capital city taken, and if their troops were still numerous, they knew better than any one else how little dependence they could place on forced levies in battle with the *Falanginos* and Valle's free men. Mayorga's execution was the last straw. If Walker would shoot Mayorga, he would shoot any enemy he could get his hands on. Why not? They, themselves, would do it in the same situation.

Yes, yes—they clamored, one to the other, in hasty conference at Masaya—accept his offer of peace while he is in the mood to discuss compromise. *Valgame Dios!* Behold what had happened in a week. What might not another week bring forth? Let well enough alone. It was preferable to save something rather than to lose all. And the future must produce a remedy for their plight. *Seguro!* This cursed American could not always be so lucky. Placate him for a little, then—!

So Monsieur Pierre Rouhaud, who had borne to Corral the notification of Mayorga's execution, returned that night with a note to Walker, announcing that the Legitimist general would present himself at the barricade on the Masaya road early the next morning, prepared to treat for a definitive peace.

Walker's comment, as he tossed the note across his desk to Ormerod, was:

"You might file that with the staff records, Captain. It seems I estimated the man correctly. But it is strange, is it not, that he should be so convinced of my ferocity, yet willing to entrust himself to my power? An extraordinary organism, the human brain!"

In the morning Corral appeared, attended by a small staff—a tall, handsome man, with alert features, dressed in the rich uniform of a general of division. Walker looked more insignificant than ever beside him; the filibuster chief had no uniform of any description, and his black broadcloth was badly soiled and frayed. But Ormerod, at his elbow, could not fail to note that when the two commanders shook hands it was Corral who qualified in the first silent deal of eyes.

They rode through streets lined with troops, for in addition to all the regular force under arms, Walker had paraded every man amongst the temporarily stranded California passengers for whom he could find a musket, and this addition to the filibusters affected Corral no less than the personality of Walker. The Americans showed a strength twice that they could actually muster for the field.

At the Government House in the Plaza the commanders dismounted and, attended by their staffs, retired to a chamber which had been prepared for the negotiations. And here again Walker took his adversary by surprize.

"My purpose is to establish peace," he said briefly. "To gain that purpose it is necessary for us to sink our differences. Here is a piece of paper. Write on it what you think should be in the treaty, remembering that there must be an equitable division of authority between the parties."

Corral blinked in astonishment as the interpreter repeated Walker's statement.

"There is the question of the presidency?" he hinted.

"Whom would you recommend?" parried Walker. "Yourself, perhaps, general?"

"Oh, no! Oh, no!"

"But a gentleman of your persuasion," suggested Walker. "It is my desire to be as generous as possible, señor. Let us begin by naming a Legitimist president."

Corral was red-hot for such a concession. Ormerod, his lawyer's mind on the watch for ulterior motives, perceived the trap Walker had set, and enjoyed a secret grin.

For several hours the names of Legitimist candidates were discussed, but none of them won favor from Walker's Nicaraguan advisors until Don Patricio Rivas was mentioned. He was an elderly Legitimist of moderate views, who, the Democrats believed, might be relied upon to deal justly by their party. Corral was for him because he was pliable and readily handled. Walker assented to Rivas because he was determined to accept any man acceptable to the Democrats.

Urged on by Walker, Corral drove ahead with his pen. Clause after clause he scrawled, and always Walker gave urbane approval as soon as the translation had been read to him. He could afford to, Ormerod realized, for they were all mere matters of detail, authentication of commissions granted, indemnification for loans and enforced assessments, a few perquisites for Corral's intimates; but nothing of real importance.

In the full pride of authorship, vainglorious of the terms he was wringing from the filibuster, Corral had just provided for one of his subordinates, when a sudden thought assailed him. He snatched up the sheets from the table, scanned them closely and gaped at Walker.

"But you!" he exclaimed. "What do you—"

"An excellent contribution of ideas, General," applauded Walker. "A well-rounded treaty. And fair, eminently fair. But you are not quite fair to yourself, are you? There is no mention of office for you in it?"

"But I— But I am—"

"We must have an understanding," pursued Walker. "The cabinet should be evenly divided, and in that case, you should be secretary of war? Eh?"

Ormerod enjoyed another secret grin as Corral gulped down the realization of the position into which he had been maneuvred.

"Secretary of war! Oh, yes. But the commanding general of the army—"

"Exactly," said Walker softly. "The commanding general can not be secretary of war. We must make an equitable division of authority, you know. A Legitimist president, we have said, and a Legitimist secretary of war. But the commander-in-chief will have to be a Democrat."

"You must be commander-in-chief," exclaimed Corral. "Yes, yes." He choked sorrowfully. "You must be commander-in-chief."

"You are very flattering," acknowledged Walker. "Perhaps you will write out the clause, General?"

Very slowly Corral pushed his pen back and forth over the page in front of him. Very silently he offered the page to the interpreter, who read it aloud:

" 'General Walker is recognized as general-in-chief of the army of the republic. He will be named as such by decree.'

"Ah, that is truly flattering, General," murmured Walker. "I appreciate your confidence. It is an important post you grant me. None more so."

Outdoors, a few minutes afterward, Ormerod described the episode to Jenkins and Cabot and a select group of *Falanginos*, who succumbed to hilarious mirth.

"You cant beat the hemperor," cried Cabot. "He's Dodson and Fogg rolled into one. 'An important post,' says he. Oh, Samivel, Samivel, hit's a by-blow as ever was!"

X

GREAT days, those that followed. Days of triumphs, days of state entries, days of booming cannon and chiming bells, days of *Te Deums*. Thousands of Indians from the Jalteva suburbs and the *pueblas* along the lake shore, in raiment immaculately white, coppery faces humbly worshipful of the huge strangers from *El Norte* who had abolished the press-gang and ended the eternal war. Hordes of *politicos* from Managua, Masaya, Rivas and Leon, black-clad jackals nosing at old trails of privilege and graft. Religious processions of thanksgiving and intercession. Battalions of *valiantes* from Rivas and Masaya, tramping in incredulous of this purported miracle, to stack arms in the arsenal; tramping out so happy that they could only cross themselves and weep.

Days no Nicaraguan had ever thought to see, when Democrat and Legitimist met together in amity, and both heralded the arrival of Don Patricio Rivas. A stout little man, Don Patricio, very simple and honest, well meaning, kindly, perturbed by all these extraordinary happenings, but trying his best to do his share to make them fruitful. His enemies, with the keen wit of the Latin-American, had dubbed him Don Patas Arriba—Don Topsy-turvy—and Ormerod, with many another observer, wondered at the savage justice of the nickname. Don Patricio *was* upside-down; all Nicaragua was upside-down.

There wanted nothing of dignity in the inauguration of the provisional president. Walker had seen to that. Files of stalwart Americans, under Gilman and Hornsby, and of Valle's Nicaraguans kept the way for him. Jenkins' troops of Rangers, newly organized, rode with a squadron of lancers as his escort, while Walker and a group of Democratic and Legitimist officers, including Corral, attended him. In the ancient Cabildo Padre Vigil awaited them beside an improvised altar, and on a copy of the Gospels Rivas swore solemnly to maintain the treaty and deal honestly with all people. And as the president rose from his knees, Corral gestured to Walker that they, too, should take oath to maintain the instrument they had conceived and signed. This had not been on the program of the ceremony, but without hesitation Walker handed his hat to Ormerod, stepped forward and knelt beside Corral's handsome figure, repeating in his imperfect Spanish the form of the oath the Legitimist recited. A sinister touch, but no one heeded it.

Outside the cannon boomed again, and the bells clanged a wild pæan of joy, bells of the Parochial, bells of San Francisco, of Esquipulus, of Guadeloupe, of La Mercedes, bells that were answered from every village within reach of their brazen voices. In the streets the people knelt and danced, prayed, sang. No more war! No more treachery! No more fusillades against the wall of the Parochial!

Attending his chief across the Plaza, Ormerod contemplated mistily the vaulting emotion of the moment. It was tremendous, this kindling of hope that had charred to ashes. It justified all and everything:

poor Mayorga's summary doom, his own plunge into uncharted seas. Surely, any man who had participated in such an achievement, however trifling his contribution, must feel honored. But Walker strode, impassive and aloof, in the midst of hysterical cheering—*"Viva los Americanos!" "Viva el General Walker!"*—his level gray eyes surveying coldly the teeming multitudes.

The man's worst enemy could not charge him with succumbing to the intoxication of victory, Ormerod reflected. In two weeks, with a handful of troops, he had welded brawling factions into a nation, lifting himself in the process from the position of an alien mercenary to the highest military rank in the land. A doubtful colonel, he was become by executive decree general of division and commander-in-chief. By ——, the Commodore could have done no more! And Ormerod wondered what Vanderbilt would say, now, to Walker's grandiose designs. A practical man, the Commodore. He could appreciate success.

In the entrance to the *cuartel* Walker paused and looked back over the sea of bobbing heads to where Rivas rode, with Corral at his elbow, to the Casa Presidente.

"A wonderful scene, General," exclaimed Ormerod.

Walker made a slight motion of assent.

"But you must remember that these people are very mercurial, Captain," he added. "They have neither stability nor genuine confidence in one another. You observe General Corral's trick upon me? It was that, I assure you. He could not believe I was committed to uphold the treaty by the mere act of attaching my signature. No, I must swear to it. Superstition must be invoked to bolster up my honor. Or it may be he hoped I would refuse to swear, and in that case he might have denounced me as intending secretly to subvert the new government."

"But General Corral does not represent the people in that attitude," protested Ormerod.

"The Latin-Americans believe whatever they are told last," returned Walker. "It is difficult to know whom to credit in a situation like this."

He stared over the Plaza with that distant look in his eyes which gave him an effect of uncanny prescience.

"I am sending Canedo to fetch de Avila," he said abruptly. "He has had much to do at Leon in bending our Democrats to accept compromise. But I need him here. The señorita, also. She can see into men's hearts; a precious gift when one has reason to fear treachery."

Ormerod's pulse had quickened at mention of the señorita.

"The de Avilas can help," he agreed. "But what reason have we to fear treachery?"

"The best of reasons, sir," Walker answered gloomily. "Jealousy! Do you suppose that Corral is enthusiastic over our control of the military? No, no! And if the peasants and townsfolk applaud us, is that not another incentive for him to take thought to the future? He is not in entire misapprehension of my plans, and he must know that in them there is no permanent place for him."

"There has been no indication of treachery," demurred Ormerod. "Most of the Legitimist troops are disarmed and dispersed."

"If the treachery was indicated, we would not need to be concerned about it," said Walker. "Treachery, like any enmity, is only dangerous when it is under cover."

XI

DON JAIME and the señorita came suddenly, several days before they were expected. Working at his papers in the orderly room at headquarters, Ormerod heard the clatter of hoofs on the Plaza pavement, the *thlatter-tat-thlatter-tat* of lance-butts in stirrup-cups, a bark of command. He jumped up, and hastened out into the *zaguan*, already uneasy because he knew that no lancers were on duty that morning.

The harsh sunlight blinded him as he stepped from beneath the archway; then, shading his eyes, he saw the señorita's willowy shape in an English riding-habit, swaying gracefully on a side-saddle. De Avila, beside her, looked older, more fragile; his ivory pallor was accentuated by a film of dust; but his eyes blazed with the same unconquerable light. Canedo, swinging down from his saddle, was trig and precise in uniform and varnished riding-boots, burnished saber and gold-laced képi; he scowled as Ormerod reached the señorita's stirrup first, and without a word, turned to assist Don Jaime to dismount.

"You see, I returned to drink of your cup—as you told me I should?" said Ormerod, taking her gloved hand.

She nodded to him absently, disengaging her right knee from the horn, slipping her left foot from the stirrup into his open palm.

"Yes, yes, my friend, I am not surprized," she answered. "I had heard of you. But where is your general?"

Ormerod was hurt. Her manner was indifferent. She revealed none of that breathless vigor of personality which had so impressed him in San Francisco.

"He is within doors," he replied. "But he is engaged. Must you see him soon?"

Her riding whip tapped her boot.

"We have most urgent news."

Don Jaime, limping forward stiffly, supplemented her curt statement.

"News! *Valgame Dios!* We 'ave deescoverr mos' 'orrible trrreachery."

Ormerod recoiled involuntarily.

"Treachery?"

Canedo joined them with a faint swagger.

"The accursed Legitimists are up to their old tricks," he rasped. "Teach a tiger to tend cattle, teach a *blanco* to keep faith."

"But who?" stammered Ormerod. "Are you sure?"

De Avila started to draw a bundle of letters from his pocket, but the señorita checked him.

"This is no place for disclosures," she said. "Must we, indeed, wait to see General Walker?"

"No, you shall see him immediately," returned Ormerod. "Come in, please. Here in my office. I will inform the general of your errand."

He left them in the high-ceiled orderly room, where Cabot was industriously copying the orders of the day, and went in search of Walker, whom he found closeted with Hornsby and Jenkins. The two subordinates were openly amazed at Ormerod's message, but Walker received it indifferently.

"What did I tell you, Captain?" he said. "It was bound to come. Ask our friends—no, we will go to them."

Don Jaime was sitting in Ormerod's chair; the señorita had perched sidewise on the desk. Canedo was tramping up and down the room. Entering upon them unannounced, Walker greeted each blandly, bowed over the señorita's hand and waved away the chair Cabot proffered.

"Captain, Ormerod tells me you have news of some treachery against us," he remarked. "Who—"

"Corral," snapped the señorita.

The room became absolutely still. Walker looked from one to the other of his visitors, the girl as unmoved as himself, Don Jaime twitching nervously at his mustache, Canedo rubbing his chin and fiddling with his saber-hilt.

"That is a very serious charge," Walker replied soberly. "I have no reason to find fault with General Corral's conduct since the treaty was signed."

"Show him," said the señorita to her father.

Don Jaime tremblingly produced the bundle of letters and handed them to Walker.

"Zhere ees prroof," he quavered. "Black prroof. Name', plot, all ees zhere."

"That will show you how much you can trust a Legitimist, General," exclaimed Canedo. "*Jesu!* There's excuse for a few fusillades in those letters."

Walker glanced rapidly through the documents in the bundle.

"I see, I see," he murmured.

He never flinched, Ormerod noted. Almost it seemed that his color heightened somewhat, as if he was pleased. It might have been good news, not bad.

"How did these fall into your possession, Don Jaime?" he inquired.

"We 'ave watch zee frrontier," replied the old diplomat. "Maria, she 'ave a thought perr'aps thees kin' of thing go on."

"I suspected our Legitimist friends might try to communicate with Guardiola and their comrades who fled to Honduras," amended the señorita. "So we had a lookout kept on the roads. This packet was being carried by a Democrat, who had no idea what it contained, and was glad to give it up."

"It puts Corral's life at our discretion," said Walker. "What a knave the man is! Listen, gentlemen." He turned to his officers. "These letters are from Corral and his subordinates. They do not mince matters. For instance, Corral writes to Guardiola, whom we whipped at Virgin Bay, and on the first, only two days after he and I swore to uphold the treaty and the provisional government!

> "It is necessary that you write to friends to advise them of the danger we are in, and that they work actively. If they delay two months there

> will not then be time. Think of us and of your offers. I salute your lady; and commend your friend, who truly esteems you and kisses your hand.
>
> P. Corral.

"Oh, yes, and there is a postscript, which leaves nothing to the imagination:

> "Nicaragua is lost; lost Honduras, San Salvador and Guatemala, if they let this get body. Let them come quickly if they would meet auxiliaries.

"I have given a rough translation, but it is substantially accurate. If those words have meaning, they mean that Corral plans to introduce troops from other states to overset the provisional government."

"We can't trust anybody," cried Ormerod.

Hornsby and Jenkins muttered assent; stared from the farther side of the room with a tense face.

"Shoot every Legitimist in Granada," shrilled Canedo. "Make a—what do you call it?—clean sweep. Bah! Don Patas Arriba is in the plot, no doubt."

Walker shook his head.

"Don Patricio is not yet in Corral's confidence, of that I am quite sure. Don't you agree with me, Don Jaime? Corral must have some sense—"

"Corral is plotting for himself, not for Don Patricio," the señorita thrust in impatiently. "Don Rafael talks foolishly."

"*Sí, sí*," assented de Avila. "You mus' not be so thirrst' for blood, Rafael. We are not *antropofagos*, we are not barrrbarrian, we are not Legitimist!' "

Canedo sulked under the double reproof.

"It would be bad policy, as well as needlessly cruel, to attempt a general reprisal for Corral's treachery," endorsed Walker. "I am sure it will answer our purposes to bring Corral to book."

"Will the president support you?" questioned the señorita.

"He will not like to, but he can not help himself."

Ormerod had a sickening sensation of aversion to the whole business.

"More shooting!" he gritted. "I thought we were through with that sort of thing."

"I should prefer not to have to shoot another man, myself, Captain Ormerod," Walker answered patiently. "But it is not a question of individual preference, but of what is best for the country."

Hornsby came to Ormerod's support.

"Oh, but General, surely we needn't shoot the fellow! He's a scoundrel, and all that; but put him in a cell or ship him off to join Guardiola. Nobody will ever take him seriously again."

The señorita slapped her riding whip on the desk with the force of a pistol's discharge.

"This is not time for weakness," she proclaimed. "You spare Corral, and what happens? Every petty Legitimist who nurses a grudge against us will whisper that we are afraid to punish treason. You will encourage treachery. You will call for trouble, endless trouble. But if you act justly, ruthlessly, the traitors will skulk in their holes. One shooting at the right moment will save scores of lives later."

"*Sí, sí*," applauded her father, and Canedo grinned tigerishly.

"You interpret my own thoughts, señorita," said Walker, bowing. "I do not think we need argue the matter further. Captain Ormerod, I wish you to get the troops under arms, and have all guards and pickets doubled. Jenkins, ride to the president's house, and ask him and the Cabinet to favor me with their company—simply tell him the national interest is at stake. Hornsby, I want you to fetch Corral. You will say nothing more than that the president requires him here."

"Let me arrest him," begged Canedo.

Walker hesitated.

"I should be glad to favor your request, Don Rafael," replied the filibuster finally. "But it seems to me it will be preferable to have Corral handled by American officers. In that case there will be less chance for his friends to represent him as a Legitimist victim of Democratic vengeance."

"*Bueno*," agreed de Avila. "A wise thought, *mi general*."

And the señorita inclined her head as she slid from her seat on Ormerod's desk.

"Don Rafael shall escort me home," she said, much to Canedo's distaste. "We should only be playing to Corral's advantage if we helped the Legitimists to cry, 'Factionalism!' "

Ormerod passed out ahead of her, hurrying to carry his instructions to Gilman, in command at the *cuartel*. He was giving some instructions to the sergeant of the headquarters guard in the *zaguan* when Canedo overtook him. The Nicaraguan, still scowling sulkily, continued on to dismiss his lancers to the cavalry lines out on the Jalteva road, and as the sergeant saluted and stepped back the señorita touched

Ormerod's shoulder. Her eyes smiled up into his ugly face.

"Do you know the Casa de Avila?" she asked. "It is over toward La Mercedes. We shall be there from now on, and I hope you will come to see me. We live *a la Inglesia,* as the Italians say."

"I—why, I'd like to," Ormerod answered clumsily. "I wanted to see you—very much. And I thought—I thought—you were not—"

Her smile became warmer.

"My friend, there has been that on my soul which has weighed down my spirits like a leaden ball. It seemed we should never reach here. And all the journey, league by league, I was tormented by fancies of treacheries and perils unknown to us. We have labored so long for this. If we had been too late I—I must have killed myself. But we were in time, so there is no need to recall such thoughts."

"Good ——, no!" he exclaimed, shocked.

She patted his sword-hilt.

"But I was never in doubt of you, my friend. Some people I *know.* And I knew you were one of us."

"It's odd how we have been brought together," hazarded Ormerod. "We come from opposite sides of the world."

"But there is a bond between us," she reminded him. "The bond of life; life given, and accepted. And I shall be in your debt always, until I have repaid."

Ormerod felt foolish. This seemed unnecessarily dramatic.

"Oh, there isn't any question of repayment. It was a little thing—"

"A little thing!" Her eyes blazed. "Señor, life is not a little thing, and because it is not, those who are not little, themselves, give and return it freely." She choked with emotion. "Life is great, it is beautiful! Only when one stops to haggle for it does it cheapen."

A snarled interjection in Spanish drew Ormerod's attention to Canedo, glaring at them from the doorstep.

"I beg your pardon," the Nicaraguan added sarcastically in English; "but I *thought* you required your horse, señorita."

"I do," she answered calmly, and offered Ormerod her hand as frankly as an American girl. "Good-by, my friend. We must talk again when there is less for you men to do."

Taking the hint, Ormerod mumbled an incoherent response, and hastened off across the Plaza to rouse Gilman.

XII

DON PATAS ARRIBA'S eyes bulged fishwise and his ruddy cheeks sucked in and out like panting gills as he absorbed the purport of the papers Walker silently laid before him. Ormerod, watching vigilantly, one hand on his pistol, saw Corral's face go gray as he, too, realized the character of the letters that lay between himself and the President; but that was the only sign of emotion the Legitimist chief revealed. He sat bolt upright in his chair, imperturbable of feature, eyes staring straight ahead of him.

"Oh, *mi general, mi general!*" moaned Don Patricio. And with a rising note of indignation, brandishing the incriminating letters in air, "It is your handwriting, your signature. What? Do I not know it? Look! Behold!"

Corral put the proffered documents aside.

"Have I denied it?" he returned, as calm as Walker, opposite.

De Avila leaned forward, his dark eyes afire with righteous anger.

"So?" he hissed in sibilant Spanish. "You flaunt your guilt in front of us? Do you consider us so puerile that we will accept it, and forget our resentment? Do you think—"

"I have thought to serve my country as seemed to me right," declared Corral.

"Your conception of right is scarcely an honorable one, señor," Walker remarked in halting idiom.

Corral shrugged his shoulders.

"Why pretend that we are friends?" he countered. "In effect, we are enemies,

"But you swore with me on the Holy Evangels," persisted Walker, "to uphold the treaty which was almost entirely the work of your mind, and which you voluntarily signed. It was not my idea that you should swear or that I should swear, señor. It was yours. But having sworn, I shall uphold the treaty and the government it created, at any cost to myself or to any one else."

His quiet voice rang through the room, and Corral flushed.

"Why talk?" he sneered. "You have the advantage, Señor Walker, you and your

Democratic friends. Take warning by this, Don Patricio," he addressed the president, fuming, next to him, "we Legitimists are in a hostile camp. One by one they will rid themselves of us as suits their convenience. I am first, but your time will come."

"He shall have a fair trial," said Walker.

"Yes, yes," bleated the president. "He must have a fair trial."

"How? A fair trial?" mocked Corral. "Your Leonese can be depended upon for justice, eh!"

"Would you prefer a court of American officers?" asked Don Jaime.

Corral swallowed hard.

"Yes," he answered very low.

Walker appealed to Rivas.

"It is desirable, *Señor Presidente*, that this unfortunate affair should not excite any unnecessary renewal of party feelings. Do you consider Don Jaime's suggestion a help to that end?"

Poor old Don Patas Arriba! He hated to say yes; he hated to say no. Corral was his political associate; no great friend, to be sure, yet of his belief. Walker was a strange and mysteriously efficient *Americano*, an alien who had become overnight the most powerful man in Nicaragua. If he sided with Walker, infallibly Walker and the Democrats of the north would be strengthened; Leon would be still more exalted over Granada. If he sided with Corral, he would incur the wrath of Walker and the *demonios* of riflemen who fearlessly accepted odds of four to one; but worst of all, his native honesty conceded the entire wrongness of Corral's act. It had been aimed as much against him, Don Patricio, as against Walker. For Rivas was no fool. He knew his own people. And he knew that Corral had plotted for Corral's advantage, for the reestablishment of an unyielding Legitimist government which must have demanded the expulsion from preferment of every upholder of compromise.

"I am in accord with Don Jaime," he replied at last. "Yes, yes, let the court be of Americans. They should be untainted by our lamentable misunderstandings."

So it was decided. A court martial of senior officers was convened, with Hornsby as President, and Corral conducted himself before it so straightforwardly as to minimize in the minds of his judges the treachery of the act for which he was on trial. If he was wrong, he said, he had no excuse to offer. He would do the same things again. His one idea has been to regain control for the Legitimists, because only a Legitimist government could make the country happy and prosperous.

The court found him guilty, and sentenced him, in accordance with the Nicaraguan code, to death by shooting, but appended a recommendation for mercy. Walker refused to rescind the sentence. Hornsby, Ormerod, many of the leading Legitimists of Granada pleaded with him. Corral's own family, his daughters, his three sisters, pleaded for the unfortunate man. But Walker was unyielding. He stuck to the view he had taken the morning Don Jaime produced the captured letters: It was more merciful to make an example of one prominent man like Corral than to forgive the offense and delude others into believing that they might plot treason in safety.

And so the dread diapason of the fusillade again under the walls of the Parochial. "No more war! No more treachery! No more fusillades!" Alas, and alas! That had been scarcely a week ago, reflected Ormerod, and already there had recurred all save war. Treachery stalked abroad in the land; factionalism was rife as ever; Granadino hated Leonese; Leonese hated Granadino. Fanatical Legitimists had dipped their handkerchiefs in the blood of the shattered heap of flesh that had been Pedro Corral; shrieking women had clipped clotted locks of his hair as he was borne past them. His fellow-conspirators, luckier or more cautions, had fled across the frontier into Honduras or Costa Rica.

But on the surface matters were improved. The Rivas government was consolidated in power, Don Patricio, bewildered by the complexity of the situation, found himself drifting closer and closer to his Democratic allies, farther and farther from the Legitimists. He leaned heavily upon the agile brain of de Avila, even quelled his Latin aversion to feminine intrusion in public life, and accepted the ambiguous rôle of the señorita. He agreed, with a certain amount of relief, to Walker's proposal of de Avila as successor to Corral as minister of war, and in consequence his cabinet became overwhelmingly Democratic in color, while Walker was assured against double-dealing in connection with military affairs.

Unostentatiously, without visible effort, the filibuster was extending his grip upon the machinery of government. On the tenth of November, Minister Wheeler took it upon himself to recognize the Rivas administration as the *de facto* government of Nicaragua—an errant policy for which Minister Wheeler later was to have his knuckles soundly rapped by President Pierce. And in the white heat of Walker's success the farcical Kinney enterprise at Greytown was burst to smithereens. The hardiest of Kinney's followers deserted him for Walker, while he, himself, after vainly trying to intrigue an alliance with Rivas, was ignominously deported by Walker's order.

A weekly newspaper in English, *El Nicaraguense*, was established at Granada. A colonization bureau to facilitate the settlement of Americans on the public lands and the development of mines was opened, and the problem of Americanization systematically studied. That adroit rogue, Parker H. French, whose inept exploit at San Carlos had had an incalculable effect upon the fortunes of the filibusters, was shipped to Washington as "Minister near the Government of the United States of America." Better risk his rascality at home than in Nicaragua, Walker had reasoned, when Ormerod and other hard-headed subordinates objected.

"I am under obligations to the man, irksome as it is to me," the filibuster chief admitted bluntly.

American recruits were pouring into San Juan del Sur by every California steamer, and Ormerod's former acquaintance, Cornelius Garrison, of the Transit's San Francisco office, apprised of Commodore Vanderbilt's endeavors across the continent, swung from an attitude of indifference to a forthright partisan interest in Walker's policies. Was the Nicaraguan government bankrupt? Dear, dear! How deplorable! Had General Walker forgotten that there was outstanding an unsettled claim of the government against the Transit Company for percentages of annual profits payable under the company's charter? Well, there was. And Garrison's representative, a Mr. McDonald, bobbing up suddenly in Granada, volunteered a loan of twenty thousand dollars, to be secured by these unadjusted claims. How would it be paid? Oh, easily enough! Simply take that amount of bullion out of the shipment then at Virgin Bay. McDonald's requisition would be honored in New York. All of which was done, with far-reaching consequences for every one concerned, not the least of these being Ormerod.

XIII

DINNER at the Casa de Avila was very different from dinner in Washington Square. A vast stone-walled room, the carpetless floor of marble laid in squares of black and white, enormous pieces of furniture dwarfed by their surroundings, tall candles that burned yellow spirals out of the echoing shadows that crowded up to the diners' elbows, barefooted Indian servants who appeared and disappeared, silent and unsummoned. Through the shutters that covered the unglazed windows stole the night-noises of Granada: the thrumming of guitars, an occasional burst of passionate song, the *pat-pat* of a mule's dainty hoofs, a derisive yell, the clamor of a quarrel, and once the hilarious bass voices of a troop of carousing Americans.

Ormerod was the only guest this night; besides the señorita and Don Jaime there was no one at the table except a stout, elderly woman, whom the señorita introduced as her duenna, the Señora Gonzalez, born de Avila. She had no English, and was concerned chiefly with her food. Don Jaime, also, was *distrait*, seldom speaking unless courtesy required it. But the señorita was lovelier than Ormerod had ever seen her—warm, alive, intensely feminine and very talkative. She wore a frock of soft green stuff that fell low from the shoulders, and in the hollow of her breast a great emerald that bubbled with fire when the candle-light was shivered on its facets.

They talked of many things, but never of politics. Rather, the small talk of the day; the increasing magnificence of Paris, Fiesole in the spring, whether the Cologne Cathedral ever would be finished, the Virginia countryside opposite Washington, Mr. Dickens' amazing loquacity, the Italian opera, the art of Rachel. Toward the end of dinner Canedo entered with dispatches for Don Jaime. He declined an invitation to remain, frowning sulkily at Ormerod; but he paused a moment in the doorway as he was leaving.

"Shall you be seeing General Walker tonight, Captain Ormerod?" he inquired stiffly.

"I don't know," replied Ormerod, surprised. "Why? Is there anything—"

"You might tell him that his men are getting increasingly out of hand. They act as if the country already belonged to them." The Nicaraguan's voice dripped venom. "But even if it did, they might at least treat our people with ordinary consideration."

"I don't think I understand you," said Ormerod slowly.

And de Avila exclaimed testily in Spanish, continuing for Ormerod's benefit:

"You spik like a boy, Rafael! What ees thees foolishness?"

The señorita said nothing, but her olive cheeks were dyed a rich crimson as she leaned her chin on one hand and stared at her cousin's angry face.

"It is not foolishness," he returned defiantly. "I speak with moderation. The Americans have so little to do that they spend their time drinking and brawling, and not content with annoying one another, must make life miserable for those of us who have to be abroad. But I, for one, do not intend to be incommoded by them. I will come and go as I please, knowing how to protect myself."

"But if you know how to protect yourself, why appeal to General Walker?" asked the señorita now, with a contempt that drew from Ormerod unwilling sympathy for Canedo.

"I think not of myself, but of others," he flung at her, striding from the room.

"Tchut!" muttered de Avila. "The boy ees mad."

"Don Rafael! Captain!" called Ormerod, rising. "One moment, please. Wait— He's gone! I am awfully sorry, Don Jaime. It is true, as he says, our men are restless, with no more fighting in prospect. We ought to tighten the reins on them, I expect; but it isn't easy. You know what the Californians are like."

"It is no matter," the señorita interposed.

Don Jaime wagged his head gloomily.

"Eef eet ees fighting only you require to hol' your men, *mi capitan*, I think you weell not 'ave to wait ver' long." He tapped the packet Canedo had brought him. "From bot' frontier' I hear much bad news—oh, *muy triste, muy triste!* In Costa Rica the Serviles say when they are ready they come and drive us into exile, and in Honduras and Guatemala zhere ees only hate for us, too."

"The more reason for us to avoid making enemies here in Granada," replied Ormerod.

"Let Rafael fight his own battles," snapped the señorita. "He is forever babbling of being able to—"

"*Mi corazon!*" Her father's affectionate reproof brought her to a shrugging halt. "W'at then? Mus' *you* mak' a battle weeth Rafael? Eet ees no good! An' why shall you mak' leettle of heem before ozzers? He ees a man, he rrresent—"

"If he *were* a man I should not rebuke him," she said curtly.

Her father sighed, while the duenna's beady black eyes darted from one to the other of the three tensed faces.

"*Santa Maria!*" de Avila muttered to himself. He pushed back his chair. "You 'ave feenish', Don Pedro? *Bueno!* We go to zhee *salon*. I 'ave wrrriting I mus' do."

He bowed the women out of the dining-room, and with Ormerod followed them down the empty corridor to a chamber larger than the first, in which one chandelier and three or four groups of candles struggled unavailingly with the darkness that seemed straining to leap from every corner and engulf them all. Sighing again, the old statesman settled himself at a desk where the illumination was brightest. Señora Gonzales ensconced herself beneath a candelabra, and produced a piece of lace-work; but Ormerod had an uncomfortable feeling that her shoe-button eyes were glued on the chair he occupied next the señorita.

They tried for half an hour to recapture the mood of dinner, but it was impossible. The scratching of de Avila's quill, the *click-click* of the duenna's needles clawed at their nerves. When they spoke their voices belled beneath the lofty roof. The swirling shadows threatened them with a host of leering eyes.

"You see, my friends?" The señorita made a little gesture, half mockery, half pathos. "I told you we lived *a la Inglesia*. But I was mistaken. In England, in your country, yes. But in Nicaragua, it seems, no. A country is greater than a person in many ways—never more so than in questions of *convenance*."

"No, no," protested Ormerod. "I am stupid tonight. That is all."

She flashed him a smile of appreciation.

"No, you shall not humble yourself for me, my friend. It is not you who are stupid, nor I, but custom. I am already considered a woman of insane habits, outlandish, ridiculous, by my country-people. If I did not yield to one prejudice, and accept—" her long fingers waved gracefully toward the duenna's squat form—"I should be regarded as utterly abandoned."

"Preposterous," exclaimed Ormerod.

"I agree with you. Yet it is so. And while I do not care for myself, it would do my father infinite harm."

He assented dully, swearing with acute self-consciousness. Perhaps she comprehended his sensations, for she leaned closer, the big emerald on her breast twistingly flaming like a falling star.

"Come, I will not have the evening spoiled for you. You shall leave before you are disgusted with us."

The allure of her suffocated him; he could smell the scent of her hair; and that marvelous personality of hers fairly crackled in spiritual contact.

"I'd rather stay," he protested. "I haven't seen you in—"

But she was on her feet.

"Captain Ormerod must go, father," she said. "I will see him to the *zaguan*."

De Avila abandoned his writing and made acknowledgment of Ormerod's bungled phrases. The duenna started to rise, but a sharp sentence in Spanish from the señorita stopped her. A moment afterward Ormerod found himself in the corridor, dimly lighted by guttering candles, the señorita beside him, walking with the lithe, alert stride of the Englishwoman.

"You will come again, my friend?" she asked as they reached the vestibule where the massive outer door was still propped open.

"You always call me friend," he answered hoarsely. "Can I be nothing more?"

She stepped back into a patch of shadows behind the door, and he dropped his hands upon the cool flesh of her shoulders. Her eyes glowed fearlessly up into his. And the emerald, like a third eye, winked at him from the curve of her breast.

"What is more than friendship?" she whispered.

"This!" And his lips met her's.

She yielded to him, pliantly, her arms reaching out instinctively, her body quivering with an emotion which had broken loose for the first time from iron restraint. But as suddenly as she had yielded she tore herself free.

"No! *Jesu*, no!" she panted.

He caught her to him again, and in his grip she went limp, so that the fire drained out of him, and he became ashamed of his violence.

"Why?" he gasped. "Didn't you mean that?"

"Mean! Do you think I am made of stone?" She pressed her hands against his chest, and he released her. Her fingers fluttered to her hair, readjusted her frock. "But I can not. Ah, indeed, I can not! Not now—not yet. I should be very happy, if I might—a very happy woman. But that is it, you see, I am a woman. And I have work to do."

"Do it," he said fiercely. "I will help you. Do you think I am jealous of it?"

Tears welled in her eyes.

"Not you, *mi Pedro!* If only I—But you do not understand. In this country a woman can be free—as much as I am free—only if she is unmarried."

"I am an American. My wife—"

"Your wife would have no influence with Nicaraguans. It is not the Americans I must work among. It is my own people. I know them. You do not. Married, I should be cloistered as a nun. Married to you, I should be American, not Nicaraguan. What? Do I need to tell you, who have eyes to see? There is Rafael, for one. There are hundreds of others. They look on me now with suspicion, which I must labor constantly to offset. But—"

"Let us leave Nicaragua," he pleaded. "We will go to New York, wherever you please. We will travel. We will forget all this. What have politics to do with us? Why, the force that threw us together intended we should—"

The dry voice of the duenna reached them from the opposite end of the corridor; the señorita responded impatiently in Spanish.

"That is your answer," she said sadly. "There is a force greater than we can master."

"Not here," he admitted. "But at home it would mean nothing, and if you want work to do, power, we can find it in New York."

"But my work is here," she replied with a dignity that humbled him. "And here is work, too, for you."

He took a step after her.

"But if your work is done?"

"Is work ever done?" she responded. "Ah, friend—dear friend!—if it ever is!"

Her eyes regarded him mournfully, and as she turned away he saw that the emerald on her breast had slipped out of sight. And he was glad; there was nothing of abnegation in the gem's lurid glare.

"Good-by," he mumbled. "Hope I haven't made any trouble for you."

"I'm not sorry, Peter," she whispered as he passed the threshold of the *zaguan*.

XIV

ORMEROD, walking rapidly toward the Plaza, had reached the corner of a side street in rear of the *cuartel* when his ears were assailed by a babble of outcries from a *posada* which was much patronized by the American troops—laughter, jeers, howls and then a snatch of song, the absurd ballad which was Jenkins' inevitable solace in drinking:

Now, Peter he did fall in love,
  All with a nice young maid,
And the name of this young woman,
  It was Susan Ann McQuade.

Canedo's complaint popped into his mind. If Jenkins was on the warpath there might be trouble, there probably would be. With the redoubtable frontiersman to lead them, any number of rude Californians would be tempted to excess, and once started, only superior numbers could quell them.

Blow, ye winds of morning,
  Blow, ye winds, heigh-ho!
Blow, ye winds of morning,
  Blow, blow, blow.

"Haw-haw-haw! Skin the greaser, Tom. Hi, boys, look at Up teachin' the greasers to sing."

These and other shouts determined Ormerod to interfere. He remembered Cabot's warning of the insane ferocity of the scout when in his cups, but he had been so successful in curbing Jenkins' outbreak at San Juan that he was disposed to believe Cabot had exaggerated the danger.

On the doorstep of the *posada* he encountered several Americans leaving, officers who recognized him as he stepped into the light of the torch burning in an iron bracket by the door.

" 'Allo, Orrrm'rod," exclaimed de Morbecque. "You don' look for trouble, eh?"

"What do you mean?"

"Tom, 'e ees on a bust. You leave him be."

"Cabot has gone for the general," volunteered one of the Frenchman's companions.

"As bad as that?" Ormerod queried doubtfully.

"He's in a killing humor," said a third man.

"Well, in that case—"

Ormerod was interrupted by another thundering stave:

Now, Peter he did go out West,
  To trade in furs and skins,
And he was killed and scalp-ed by
  The bloody In-dy-ins.

"Hey, you greaser," bellowed Jenkins. "You, over in the corner! Yes, Canedo. I know you. Come over here, and sing."

"Good ——," exclaimed Ormerod. "I've got to go in."

And he pushed by the group that had stopped him, and entered the *posada*, which, like other institutions in Granada, represented a compromise between native and American customs. A bar ran along one side; that was American. Little tables were dotted over two-thirds of the floor space; that was Latin.

Jenkins leaned on the bar, his elbows propped against the top, his thumbs hooked into the belt from which depended his pistol-holster. His ordinary expression of shrewd kindliness had become a devilish mask, with cruel, curling lips and eyes that glittered crazily. Twenty or thirty Americans, who laughed respectfully at his antics, gave him ample elbow-room, and the half dozen Nicaraguans in the place cowered as far from him as they could get—all but Canedo, who, as Ormerod came in, stepped quietly up to the bar.

"If I sing, Captain Jenkins," Canedo said haughtily, "it is in my own tongue and when I please."

"My song ain't good enough for you, eh?" growled the scout, slightly taken aback by this first opposition he had encountered.

"It is not a question of your song or my song," retorted the Nicaraguan, whose cheeks were white with rage; "but of your

Yankee discourtesy. What, fellow? Do you think to treat all Nicaraguans as *arrieros*, muleteers? Do you think that you already own our country, you, who are here on sufferance? Do you—"

Jenkins' revolver leaped from the holster so quickly that Ormerod was unable to follow the swoop of the frontiersman's gun-hand.

"Climb down, greaser," he snarled. "Hop when I tell you, now, or I'll shoot yore toes to —— ahead o' you. *Pronto!*"

The muzzle dropped, but Ormerod cried out before the trigger-finger pulled home.

"Tom!" And as Jenkins looked up; "I came in for a drink with you. What about it?"

Jenkins peered at him uncertainly.

"Howdy, Pete! Cl'ar out, and leave me bore this yere ornery greaser—called me a Yankee, he did, —— his soul!"

And Canedo made matters worse by raving at Ormerod!

"Why must you interfere? Let the ill-bred cur shoot me, if it is his idea of dueling to assassinate an unarmed man."

"No, no," cried Ormerod, "you don't understand, Don Rafael. He isn't in his right mind."

"I'll l'arn the both of you if I'm in my right mind," howled Jenkins.

His Colt spouted a stream of flame, and Canedo jumped as the bullet flicked the welt of his boot. But the Nicaraguan's rage was stimulated to desperation by his involuntary avoidance of the shot, and he started to lunge forward to attack the scout with his bare hands. Jenkins had re-cocked the clumsy weapon, and in another breath Canedo might have been dead, if Ormerod had not hurled himself at the scout from the side, forcing down Jenkins' gun-hand, so that the bullet was discharged into the dirt floor.

Men scattered right and left as Ormerod wrestled with the madman; some made for the door, some ducked behind the bar, several tried to dive out the windows, which were barred. Canedo hovered around the pair, growling blasphemies at both; it seemed to be a point of honor with him not to leave the spot. Advice was showered freely on Ormerod, and on the Nicaraguan, too.

"Knock him on the head, Captain."

"Run him into the wall."

"Get out, Canedo."

"Here, greaser, pull your freight while you can."

Jenkins snarled and cursed; Ormerod fought silently. And slowly, the younger man asserted his superiority. Except for von Ritterstein, there was no man in Walker's expedition who could match himself in sheer physical strength with the New Yorker. Jenkins had all the rough-and-tumble skill of the frontier; he fought, in his delirium, with disregard for all rules. But by watchfulness and keeping his temper, Ormerod succeeded in retaining his clutch on the scout's pistol-hand, and finally wrung the weapon from Jenkins' grasp. When it clattered on the floor he kicked it against the wall, shifted his grip, gave a heave and pinned Jenkins helpless in a half-Nelson.

"Will you behave, Tom?" he demanded, backing his prisoner on to the bar.

A flood of curses answered.

"I'll have to knock you out, if you won't let up, old-timer."

"—— yore lily-livered soul, Yankee! I'm a white man, and you takin' a greaser's—"

"That will do, Tom," interrupted Walker's voice.

Ormerod started at the icy coldness of the command. He realized now the stillness of the disordered room. Looking over his shoulder, he saw the filibuster standing just inside the door, gray eyes stony with menace. Cabot stood behind Walker.

Jenkins, bent over the bar backward, could not see his commander, but Walker's first word took the fight out of him. He relaxed inert, and a sheepish expression dawned on his face.

"I think you can release him, Captain Ormerod," added Walker. "I am extremely obliged to you for handling the situation. You have done well, sir—but that is no more than I should have expected of you."

He turned to Canedo, whose apparent anger was unabated.

"Captain Canedo, I gather that Jenkins has been rude to you."

"Rude, General! He fired upon me, would have murdered me."

"I can only apologize," said Walker impassively, "and require Captain Jenkins to do likewise."

Jenkins, released by Ormerod, leaned against the bar, exhausted, his sheepishness becoming pitiful. He was like a whipped dog.

"You heard me, Tom," Walker went on.

"Yes, General."

"I am waiting for your apology."

"Wa'al, General, I didn't rightly—"

"You shot at Captain Canedo? Used opprobrious language to him?"

"I shot at him, General. But I reckon I dunno what you mean by that air—"

"You cursed him," Walker explained impatiently. "You were guilty of gross discourtesy to a gentleman I call my friend."

"Why, I reckon mebbe I done all that, General."

"Then apologize to him."

Jenkins' Adam's apple wriggled spasmodically up and down his throat; his jaws worked as if he was chewing.

Canedo watched him, scowling, hopeful he would refuse to obey.

"I done wrong," the scout acknowledged at last. "Don Rafael, I reckon I'd oughter be ashamed o' myself. And if you-all figger you'd feel more comfortable if you took a shot at me, I—"

"I'll not have it," said Walker sharply. "Do you hear me, Tom? Don Rafael, that was not a challenge—"

"What was it?" demanded the Nicaraguan.

"An apology, sir."

Ormerod, observing his chief's tactics, knew that Walker could not suffer a duel between Jenkins and Canedo—or, for that matter, between Jenkins and any other man, whose death would make trouble. For the scout was a wizard with the pistol, one of the best shots on the frontier with the new revolver which was springing into popularity with all fighting men.

Canedo flushed.

"It puts me in the position, sir—"

"I am your commanding officer, as well as Jenkins', Captain Canedo," Walker broke in. "You are both too valuable to be allowed to risk your lives in a quarrel for which there is not adequate cause."

"There was cause for a dozen duels in the insults I was offered here," stormed Canedo. "The rest of your officers laughed—"

"Did Captain Ormerod?"

"No," Canedo admitted sullenly, "Captain Ormerod was the only one who resisted insults against Nicaragua and myself."

Walker's eyes flitted from face to face in the room, and face after face was averted from the mordant scorn of his glance.

"I can only apologize to you again, Captain Canedo," he said. "If the offense is repeated, I will have the offenders tried and punished. For the present, I think, we had best not magnify a drunkard's misconduct."

Jenkins cringed. The silence in the room was painful.

"That is all," concluded Walker. "To your quarters, gentlemen. I will shoot any man, whatever his rank, who attempts to pursue this incident. And I will shoot any man in future who makes trouble between us and our Nicaraguan allies."

He beckoned to Ormerod.

"Come with me, please."

Ormerod followed him into the street, and they walked without speaking until they had gained the Plaza, its paved expanse silver in the starlight. Walker hesitated here, then led the way to the steps of the Parochial, and sank down on the verge of the porch.

"Sit, sit, Captain," he said kindly, "I appreciate your conduct tonight. Experience has taught me I can implicitly rely on only two or three of my officers: yourself, Hornsby, Gilman, I know not who else. But that is the lot of most commanders."

"It is idleness that corrupts them, General," returned Ormerod.

"They will not be idle many months," Walker answered in almost the same words that de Avila had used. "This is a lovely scene in front of us, is it not? See how San Francisco's towers cast their shadows across the Plaza. It might be taken for a picture representing the Blessings of Peace. But before we are finished, I predict this Plaza will run red with blood."

"Not a pleasant prospect," Ormerod commented drily.

"No, sir, but as certain as fate. However, I did not come here to talk platitudes. We need more men. As a reservoir of recruits, California is not inexhaustible. Therefore we must draw upon the Eastern States. I remember that when you joined us you told me you believed recruits could be secured in New York so soon as we were established here, and I intend to send you north for that purpose by this week's steamer."

Ormerod was dismayed.

"But see here, General, I don't want to miss this fighting you talk about. I didn't join you to recruit in New York."

"I know you didn't," assented Walker. "As for the fighting, your mission should not require more than a couple of months. Get the machinery started, Captain, then rejoin us. You have seen how we are situated at present. Believe me, life in Granada will be a monotonous struggle for discipline until the spring. This is the politicians' time; the soldiers' turn comes afterward."

"I've only been here a few weeks," protested Ormerod.

He was thinking of the señorita. So near they had come, if only for an instant. And now they were to be separated again by broad seas and the length of a continent.

"Your reluctance flatters us, sir," answered Walker with the friendliness he reserved for his intimates. "But in fact, I have a double mission for you. You know of the loan the Transit Company has made us? Well, I will not hide from you that our friends in San Francisco are considerably aroused by Commodore Vanderbilt's campaign against them. They seem to anticipate his success as confidently as you did. In the circumstances, I should like to know Mr. Vanderbilt's intentions regarding my projects. I am aware that he was disposed to hold them in contempt when you left him, but he may have changed his views. In any case, I wish to know how he stands."

The filibuster's manner became more aggressive.

"The Transit, of course, is the key to Nicaragua, and particularly, the key to my plans. It must be operated by persons upon whom I can place reliance, and who will be disposed to assist, not to thwart, me. I am bound to add, Captain, that such investigation as I have made into the relations of the company with the Nicaraguan Government leads to the conclusion that the company has not been entirely honorable in fulfilling its obligations. A brief, setting forth this phase of the subject, will be placed in your hands before you leave. Am I clear?"

"Perfectly, General, but you understand that I cannot answer for Mr. Vanderbilt's attitude? He is not a man to be led by others or brow-beaten into a course of action."

Ormerod spoke with an earnestness he regretted as Walker rose and replied satirically:

"Neither am I that kind of man, my dear sir. I do not underestimate those with whom I must have dealings, and it is for that reason I am instructing you to approach Mr. Vanderbilt and sound him as to his willingness to assist the Americanization of Nicaragua. He shall have his chance along with those who have shown themselves openly friendly toward us."

Ormerod liked the tone of this statement no better than he had his chief's original comment upon the Commodore in San Juan, but he resolved to say no more, and depend upon his own knowledge of the Commodore's character to steer the two toward an agreement.

"Very well, General," he said. "I'm sorry to go, but if you say I can help the expedition better in New York than here, why, that's all there is to it."

"I am sure I can rely upon your energy and discretion, Captain," replied Walker. "You had better return to your quarters, and get some sleep. No, I shall be staying here."

"Here?" remonstrated Ormerod. "Is it safe, General?" He glanced around the cavernous mystery of the empty building. "You know, you have many enemies. There are Legitimists in Granada, friends of Corral—"

"Nonsense," said Walker good-humoredly. "The Legitimists would rather see me here than a Democrat—and you may say the same for the Democrats. Besides, if a man is not safe in the house of God, I ask you, in all reverence, where can he be safe?"

He took his hat off, and looked out over the sleeping city, a city that war had wrecked and ruined to a fourth of its former size.

"I come here to think, Captain," he went on seriously. "I find it hard to think straight. In there—" he motioned toward the bare interior—"I can be alone. And I think—and pray. I want to do what is right. It is not always easy."

When Ormerod reached the foot of the steps he was still standing on the porch, a very lonely little figure. In after years Ormerod often remembered him that way.

BOOK III

I

THE Prometheus steamed through the Narrows on the heels of the first blizzard of the winter. The Long Island woods stretched bleak and barren to the desolate outlying farms of Brooklyn; Staten Island was a white waste. New York's chimneys vented innumerable whorls of woolly smoke which vanished upward into the still, cold air. The red-brick vista of the city was hidden beneath the snow's blanket; from every street poured the merry carillon of the sleighbells — the *rinkety-tink* of butchers' sleighs; the deep *cling-clang, bling-blang* of the stages; the silvery *tinkle* of dashing cutters, weaving in and out of Broadway's gliding traffic.

Ormerod rode across-town in a hackney-coach which lurched perilously on the runners to which its springs were bolted. The sidewalk drifts were three feet high, and gangs of hoodlums prowled the streets in search of opportunities to snowball dignity and pride. In front of Barnum's Museum, at the corner of Ann Street and Broadway, the musicians in the bandstand crowned themselves with vapory halos as they tootled and fiddled and drummed. Horses kept to the trot, people tramped briskly along; everywhere was energy and vim.

Norah Connolly received him with glad surprize.

"Ready, is it?" she exclaimed in answer to his question. "Sure, I been ready for ye aany day since ye went away, Misther Payter. I knowed ye'd be afther comin' back. 'Tis your home, ain't it?"

"But I'm only back for a few weeks," he protested.

She gave him one of her shrewd looks.

"A few weeks? Ah, well, if the dear God manes ye to live at all, darlint, ye'll find us ag'in."

"You've changed your tune, Norah," he admonished her. "Has Miss Lydia been talking to you?"

"And why wouldn't she?" retorted Norah, unabashed. "But if 'tis her ye was afther comin' back to—"

"No, no," he said hastily.

"No? Ye spake mighty quick. But all the same, she's not into the city, now—nor her feyther neither. They're gone up to the Manor for Christmas. And that's where yourself will be goin', eh?"

"I'm afraid not, Norah dear. I have much business to attend to. I'm going downtown to Mr. Vanderbilt's office as soon as I've found some heavier clothing, and I probably shan't be home for dinner."

From Pearl Street he went straight to No. 5 Bowling Green, and was fortunate in finding the Commodore on the sidewalk, just on the point of stepping into his cutter for a spin up to Harlem.

"—— Henry ——!" roared Vanderbilt to the unspeakable delight of an admiring circle of newsboys and passersby. "Where in —— did you drop from, Pete?" He flung the reins to the negro groom. "Here, Jabez, take 'em up to Washington Place. Tell Mis' Vanderbilt I won't be home till late. Now, then, Pete, come on in and spill what you know. I'm like to bust a gut for cur'ousness. —— in heaven, boy, you're gittin' mighty sudden in your comin's and goin's."

"I suppose you've heard what has happened in Nicaragua," said Ormerod as they climbed the stairs.

"'Should say I have! And I take off my hat to your friend Walker. By the etarnal, I like a man that goes for what he wants, and gits it. My money backs them fellers. Fust off, o' course, I suspicioned he was a cross between a play-actor and a highwayman; but he's proved himself by what he done. And I'm ready to talk turkey with him any time he says."

"That simplifies my mission," remarked Ormerod.

The Commodore paused with his hand on the knob of the private-office door.

"Ho! Come up with a proposition for the old man, eh?"

"More or less. Walker needs recruits, and he also wants to find out how you stand toward him. Naturally, he considers the friendly operation of the Transit essential to his plans."

"Shows his sense, there," commented Vanderbilt. "Matter of fact, Pete, it looks like him and me was goin' to sleep in the same bed."

"You've won your fight with the Garrison-Morgan crowd, then?"

Opening the office door, the Commodore waved to the bulk of his personal safe in the corner.

"'Got enough stock there to swamp the —— fools. 'Course, I can't use it agin 'em till the annual election of officers in

February, but they're as good as sunk, now —and they know it, you bet."

He produced a bottle of whisky and two glasses, and shoved forward a chair with his foot.

"Sit, and likker up. What's on your mind?"

"What's on yours?" countered Ormerod.

The Commodore's eyes narrowed.

"Yankee talk, eh? Say, while we're askin' questions, what's this Spencer wrote me about you and him havin' a run-in on the San Juan River? He sort of made out you claimed to be representin' me down there."

Ormerod outlined his encounter with the spy at Castillo Viejo, and Spencer's threat against Cabot and Jenkins.

"They were my friends, Commodore. Their deaths wouldn't have affected things one way or the other in Nicaragua, and Spencer wasn't after them for any concern with your affairs, but just because of his own personal animosity. You've got to remember that all his sympathies are with the Legitimists, and Walker's crowd—"

"I know, I know," agreed the Commodore. "Don't see how I can blame you in the circumstances, Pete. I'd have done the same thing myself."

"I warned you Spencer was bad medicine," reminded Ormerod.

"Dear ——, boy!" snorted Vanderbilt. "D' you think I'm that innercent? I don't expect fellers that do my dirty work to be tender in their consciences. Well, we'll forgit it. I s'pose mebbe you did me a good turn in bluffin' Spencer 'cause Walker would have been sore at losin' two men thataway. As it is, we can both spread our cards, and talk fair."

"All right," Ormerod took him up. "What do you mean by that? What will you do to help in the Americanization of Nicaragua?"

"Anything that won't injure the interests of the stockholders in the Transit," Vanderbilt answered promptly. "Why? What do you want me to do?"

"Garrison, in San Francisco, is shipping us recruits at a nominal rate of fare, sometimes no fare at all, when he has room for them," said Ormerod. "He has also advanced us twenty thousand dollars on account against the Nicaraguan Government's unsettled claims on the company."

"I've no objection to bein' as generous," returned the Commodore. "I ain't so sure about outright loans—not for the company, anyway; there's such a thing as a board of directors, Pete, even if Garrison has forgotten it—but I'll be glad to voucher passages for any number of recruits you can raise, and we'll ship 'em from N'Orleans as well as New York. From all I hear, you fellers can raise more support in the South and Southwest than you can up North here. Not that I'm aimin' to claim Walker's wantin' friends in these parts. But the South can see slave States in Central America, and all the North sees is a chance for adventure. That means the serious folks in the South are for you, and only the —— in the North—that's leavin' out me and others that can figger on featherin' our own nests through Walker's policy."

Ormerod frowned.

"If the South looks for Walker to play for annexation, the South is in for a revelation," he declared. "Walker's plan is to build up a new country."

"Mebbe so, mebbe so," assented Vanderbilt. "What's the odds? The South thinks like I said, and that's what counts. How d'you feel about my proposition?"

"It's handsome enough," Ormerod exclaimed warmly. "And I entirely agree with your suggestion to ship men from New Orleans. We'll send an agent down there. In fact, we'll be spreading agents through the whole country in the next week or two."

The Commodore leaned over, and jerked him in the ribs with a stubby forefinger.

"'Got the Napoleon talk, yourself, boy," he chuckled. "Cuss me for a packet-rat, if you ain't! What are you in this show?"

"Not much," replied Ormerod, his ugly face flushing with embarrassment. "I'm only a captain, up here to recruit and settle matters with you, if I can."

The Commodore's eyes narrowed again at the final qualification.

"If you can? Ain't I reasonable?"

"It looks so to me," conceded Ormerod, "although I'm not the principal."

He recalled the subject of the brief Walker had given him, dealing with the Nicaraguan Government's past difficulties with the Transit corporation.

"Oh, yes," he continued, "there's this additional question of our government's—"

"*Your* government?" Vanderbilt challenged.

"I am speaking now as an official representative of the Government of Nicaragua," said Ormerod.

"Humph! I see," grunted the Commodore, draining a stiff shot of whisky. "All right, boy. Go on."

"There's this additional question of our Government's claim that the Transit has not paid over the ten per cent. share of its receipts, as required by its charter," resumed Ormerod.

"My recollection is that the company always sunk more'n its profits into building up its equipment acrost the isthmus," returned Vanderbilt warily.

"The figures we have don't show that," asserted Ormerod.

"Figgers is the most dishonest invention of man's brain," growled the Commodore. "What d'you want me to do? Say yes to you when I don't know the facts for myself?"

There was basic fairness in this contention, and Ormerod replied rather uneasily:

"Oh, no, Commodore! My instructions are to sound you on the subject, and learn what you are willing to do in the way of granting the government reparation. We need money, and the records show that a year or so ago the company offered to settle for thirty thousand dollars."

"Accordin' to what you tell me, Garrison's already set you up for twenty thousand dollars o' that."

"Yes, and what will you be prepared to agree to?" Ormerod shifted in his chair. He didn't altogether like this rôle; it wasn't susceptible of being handled in the way to satisfy his legal instincts. Strictly speaking, he was talking softer than his instructions required, but he solaced himself with the reflection that he knew the Commodore much better than Walker did. "If the company was willing to settle for a handsome consideration—"

"That's none of my affair," Vanderbilt interrupted sharply. "You want to remember, Pete, even if you ain't my lawyer any more, that I set out to be an honest man—and an honest man always tries to protect the interests of stockholders he represents."

"Granted, but—"

The Commodore shook his head bullishly.

"I'll agree to arbitration of any and all claims ag'in the company," he announced. "There's something about that in the charter, too, and I hold it's a fair way out of sich a difficulty as you seem to be brushin' up. Yes, sirree! One representative of the Nicaraguan—I beg your pardon, Pete!—*your* government—but don't you talk thataway to George Law or any other Knownothingers—and one representative of the company, the two o' 'em to pick a third. That's fair and legal, ain't it?"

"Yes," Ormerod agreed reluctantly. His instructions had not covered the contingency of a counter-proposition to compromise the company's dispute with the Government. It seemed just to him, but he pondered the probability of its being distorted by the Californian advisers of Walker, who pretended that no Easterner could appreciate the true rôle of the Transit in the furtherance of manifest destiny.

"It's not so generous an answer as General Walker expected, but I'll be glad to submit it to him, with a recommendation for acceptance."

The Commodore squirted a stream of tobacco-juice into the fireplace.

"Accept?" he said almost contemptuously. "O' course, he'll accept, if he ain't crazy. He's got something that I want, and I can do something for him that he needs. We got to play with each other. And from what I've seed of him he's no fool. Only a 'tarnal fool would turn down an offer like mine."

"It's reasonable," admitted Ormerod, wishing he could think of a scheme for reconciling two domineering personalities several thousand miles apart. "The one objection is: It's not what General Walker expected."

"Let him answer it, then," proposed Vanderbilt largely. "—— it, he's got a mind of his own! Mebbe he can think of something better. I'm open to argyment, Pete. I'm a business man. When a feller makes me a proposition I size it up, and if 'taint jest what hits my fancy I come back at him with my idee of what oughter be. If he don't like that idee he can fire at it, and between us, if he's nigh as big as me, we pound out a way to make the wheels go 'round. That's all business is, boy, makin' the wheels go 'round. Now, your general and me, we're two big men, and one way or t'other, him and me, we'll make the wheels go 'round in Nicaragua."

Ormerod was unhappily silent. This was a conversation he could never repeat to Walker. "*We'll* make the wheels go 'round in Nicaragua." He could imagine the cold light in the filibuster's gray eyes, the tightened lips. He must be careful how he phrased his report to Granada, he told himself, as the Commodore rambled on regarding the beauties of compromise.

II

THE next day Ormerod opened his recruiting headquarters in the St. Nicholas Hotel, and immediately discovered that this phase of his mission was as prodigal of difficulties as the problem of adjusting the conflicting egos of Vanderbilt and Walker. The newspapers, fairly reflecting the public's state of mind, received him with mixed emotions. The *Herald* wished him well, and praised Walker's cause. The *Evening Post* denounced him in a frothing fury of Abolitionist Little Americanism. *The Commercial Advertiser* was stodgily uncertain. *The Times* was impartial. An editorial in *The Tribune*, which bore the stamp of its editors' personality, called him strictly to account.

> A well-known and highly respected young New Yorker, bearer of an honored name and able to boast of a promising career at the bar, is returned from Nicaragua to lure gullible youths to the battlefield of the Slavocracy's ambitions in Central America. Not content with depleting California of its floating population, "General"—or is it "Emperor?"—Walker is determined to drain the Eastern States of vain fellows who are willing to swallow the mouthings of the apostles of manifest destiny, an empty phrase, if there ever was one. Let the gullible and vain beware, if they would not perish in the charnel-house of the tropics. And let all loyal Americans and opponents of the insane pretensions of the advocates of slavery take heed to this new menace to the integrity of the Republic. As for Mr. Ormerod, who has consented to become the tool of Walker, his friends will bewail his error, and labor as they may to frustrate its perpetuation.

The Federal authorities, under pressure of the diplomatic representatives of the other Central American governments, and likewise, because of the interference of the rascally Parker H. French—who resented the Pierce administration's refusal to accept his credentials as minister from the Rivas government—decided to take legal steps to obstruct the recruiting enterprise. The district attorneys at New York and New Orleans were directed to bring actions against persons instrumental in raising men for Walker, while the port authorities were to prohibit the sailing of steamers carrying recruits. But this was exactly the fillip required to turn the balance of popular opinion in Walker's favor, and the efforts of the Federal attorneys served no other purpose than the advertisement of the very undertakings they strove to prevent. Several steamers were stopped and searched; a few men were taken off them. But the tide of recruiting rolled on unchecked. Each steamer that sailed for Nicaragua carried from fifty to two hundred men for Walker.

Vanderbilt lent the weight of his personal influence in favor of a policy which had the support of the powerful group of financiers he was presently to oust from control of the Transit—an event which boosted Transit stock for a ten point rise. The politicians of Tammany Hall, working in harmony with Southern Democrats and Whigs, helped in the actual beating up for recruits, and also conveyed representations to the White House, which, Ormerod always thought, had something to do with the growing indisposition of the Federal authorities to compel a final issue with him. The South was on fire for Walker; everywhere below Mason and Dixon's Line public meetings were held to stimulate sentiment for him, while the temporary waning of the Border War in Kansas diverted to New Orleans several companies of adventurers who cared little where they went, so long as there was a prospect of fighting at the end of the journey.

George Law and other Knownothing leaders recklessly climbed into the same carriage with the Democrats they detested, forgot their stock cries of "No popery," "Put only Americans on guard tonight," and labored exultantly for a cause, which, they were persuaded, would increase the nation's power and prestige. "Live-oak George," in his dry way, succinctly summed up for Ormerod his own motives:

"I'm for you, my boy, for three reasons: first, I don't care what bee is in Walker's bonnet, if he succeeds, Central America will as good as belong to us, and Mexico and Cuba will follow; second, you'll draw some of these —— foreigners away from the city; and third, I suspect Vanderbilt and the Morgan-Garrison crowd one of these days will fight themselves to a stalemate, and then I hope to get the Transit for myself."

Oddly enough, the two most potent recruiting-sergeants Ormerod secured in New York were Law and Mike Gilligan. It was

Law who bought up a quantity of Army muskets, and turned them over to Henningsen for conversion into Minié rifles. And Henningsen, back and forth continually between Georgia and Washington, Washington and New York, helped in the selection of agents for Philadelphia, Baltimore and the Southern cities, carried messages for Ormerod, acted as intermediary with the Southern politicians who sponsored the filibusters in Congress, and undertook to secure modern artillery for Walker.

"Howitzers are what you need, Ormerod," declared the soldier of fortune. "From what I hear, most Central American battles are fought in cities where the houses are thick-walled. General Walker will require fairly heavy guns to breach such positions and make them untenable."

Mike Gilligan's part was to raise the Redshirts, and he was so successful that presently Ormerod received an indignant deputation of chiefs, who asserted that he was endangering the city by his raid upon the ranks of the firefighters. It seemed as if every corner loafer and ne'er-do-weel, who lacked the means or the individual initiative to reach the frontier, jumped at the chance of free passage to Central America and adventure. A lot they cared for the Slavocracy or manifest destiny! They wanted action, and were indifferent how they secured it. And swelling with pride, Mike sailed aboard the *Northern Light* toward the end of January—1856, already—top-sergeant of a company composed of lads from his own Golden Hill company and "them bloody Sixies," with a sprinkling of Chatham Square Germans to leaven the lump of Irish.

Not that the foreign-born monopolized the flow of recruits. They were a considerable proportion, but New York sent more than one blueblooded Knickerbocker to die under the Southern Cross, while the country as a whole dispatched the salt of its venturesome youth. There was a Clinton from the Empire State, who fought beside a grandson of Sam Adams of Massachusetts, a son of "Old Man" Sutter of California, a Polk of Tennessee and a Soulé of Louisiana.

Early in the new year revolutionary Cuba joined forces with Walker. Law brought to Ormerod Don Domingo de Goicouria, a graybearded, courtly, old gentleman, who had plotted with Lopez the unfortunate, and Don Domingo shortly departed south at the head of a company of fifty fiery fellow-islanders, upon whom Walker conferred the distinction of appointing them his body-guard.

By the end of February there were twelve hundred Americans in Nicaragua, but writing to Ormerod even before this date, Walker said:

> I appreciate your zeal in securing recruits, but I beg of you, Captain, do not diminish your efforts. The cholera appeared amongst us recently, and bids fair to keep up with whatever reinforcement we receive. The saddest feature of the epidemic is that it seems to fasten upon those we can least spare, the most diligent and dependable. Colonel Gilman and Captain Davidson are dead, and each morning I dread to examine the surgeons' returns.
>
> I am distressed to learn that Colonel Henningsen is still unable to separate himself from his affairs. Pray convey to him and to Mr. Law my thanks for their efforts, and assure them that I consider myself in debt to them. I am looking forward with pleasure to securing Colonel H.'s active assistance.
>
> I have to acknowledge your report of your discussion with Mr. Vanderbilt, which I have taken under consideration. In the meantime you will be so good as to have no further intercourse with him on the subject of the Transit.

Ormerod scanned the small, precise lettering of the last paragraph with a chill of foreboding; it was not a very promising reception of the Commodore's suggestion for compromising the disagreement as to the company's obligations. In the meantime, too, the annual election of officers and directors of the corporation had been held, and Vanderbilt was in undisputed control of the Transit and its dependent steamship lines, and as good as his word, was packing his vessels' steerage quarters with recruits.

Two weeks later Ormerod's suspicions were confirmed when the next steamer from Greytown brought him a brief note from the señorita:

> Dear Friend:
>
> Perhaps I do wrong in writing you, but I know you are not one to misunderstand.
>
> I am concerned over what goes on in Granada since it became known that Mr. Vanderbilt had recovered the Transit. Mr. Garrison has been here, and other gentlemen from San Francisco, friends of his, and there is open talk that it would be better to have the Transit in the hands of Californians. My father and Don Patricio shrug their shoulders and say it is unimportant what Americans operate it, and General Walker says nothing when I speak to him. But I have a feeling we shall be ill-advised to make an enemy of one so powerful as Mr. Vanderbilt. If you think as I do, it would be well for you to return here as quickly as you may.
>
> Destroy this letter. Your friend
>
> MARIA DE AVILA Y CANEDO.

Reading and rereading the careful sentences, Ormerod gritted his teeth with rage. Easy enough to bid him return, but he knew how Walker's mind worked; the subordinate who presented himself at Granada, having abandoned a post without orders, would receive neither consideration nor mercy. To take that step would be to forfeit whatever chance remained of averting a quarrel with the Commodore. For an instant he contemplated going straight to Vanderbilt, and revealing the situation in Granada; but the idea revolted him as equivalent to a betrayal of trust. He was no longer the Commodore's attorney, he reminded himself, but Walker's agent, and he owed loyalty first to the filibuster, whether he approved his chief's actions or not. He groaned as he tore the letter into tiny fragments.

There was but one path open to him: to write Walker again, stressing as diplomatically as possible the advisability of reaching an agreement with Vanderbilt, urging his own recall.

III

LYDIA received Ormerod that evening with the unquestioning friendliness she had shown in all their previous meetings since his return. It baffled him—like the shrewish impartiality Norah Connolly had for conduct he knew she disapproved.

"We don't see you very often, Peter," she said. "But you must be terribly busy. Mr. Vanderbilt says you have done wonders."

Her honest cordiality made him wince.

"I wasn't such a fool, after all," he returned roughly.

"I never thought you a fool," she answered as calmly as ever. "Rash, perhaps, but never a fool."

Van Ruysdyck bounced into the room, a second man at his heels.

"What's that you are saying, Lydia?" he questioned. "Who is a fool? Oh, by the way, Peter, you remember Lieutenant Salmon? You met him here last fall."

Ormerod acknowledged the lean Englishman's casual greeting.

"Been in Nicaragua, haven't you?" asked Salmon.

"Yes."

"Hah! Rum show—what?"

"But successful," amended old Dick. "Nothing succeeds like success, eh? But who's a fool, Lydia?"

"Nobody," she replied. "I was saying to Peter that I had thought him rash, but never a fool."

"Quite right, quite right," agreed her father. "I talked against his going, myself. Had the best intentions in the world by Jove! Thought this man Walker was a cheap-jack, charlatan, all that sort of thing. And now look at him!"

"I advise you to look at him while you can, Van Ruysdyck," drawled Salmon.

"How? What's that? What d'you—"

"I rather fancy our people at home will begin to look at him," the Englishman drawled on. "Now, that we've finished with the Russians, Lord Clarendon will have an opportunity to look after British interests on this side of the world."

"Would you mind telling me what British interests are menaced in Central America?" bristled Ormerod.

"Why, there's the Mosquito Coast and British Honduras—"

"That's buncombe, and every honest Englishman knows it. If you are jealous of American—"

"Oh, I say!"

Lydia tapped Ormerod's arm with her fan.

"Let us draw the line at politics tonight," she said. "I do not believe you and Lieutenant Salmon can ever convince each other. Besides, Mr. Greeley promised to join us at the Academy—after he heard you were coming."

The conversation throughout dinner was innocuous. Van Ruysdyck and Salmon discussed the settling of several contracts for purchases of naval stores which the Royal Navy would not require now that the peace commissioners were meeting in Paris.

With Lydia he talked chiefly of the experiences he had encountered during his mission in New York. She was curious about Nicaragua, questioned him concerning life in Granada, the capture of the city and the men who composed the filibuster army; but he put her off as much as he could. She never spoke of the señorita, although he was certain the Nicaraguan girl must be in her thoughts, and once, with a kind of desperate honesty, he referred to the Señorita de Avila: "It was she who had the forethought to watch the roads to the Honduran frontier. That was the way we captured Corral's correspondence."

Lydia shuddered.

"He was the Legitimist who was shot? Oh, how dreadful! But I suppose there was nothing else to do, Peter."

"We none of us liked it," he admitted; "but the general knew best, I expect. And de Avila agreed with him."

"Did she—" Lydia hesitated.

"She said it would mean only the killing of more people if we spared him," Ormerod answered bluntly. "She was right."

Lydia stared at the candelabra flickering in front of her.

"She must be very brave," she said at last. "I couldn't— But I don't mean to criticize. One can never be sure what one would do in a situation so—so different."

After that they talked the gossip of the day until it was time to go on to the Academy, sleighbells jingling merrily in the frosty air under a hard blue sky, all flecked with glittering stars, up Fifth Avenue and through the Union Park to Fourteenth Street, and so into Irving Place, where drivers shouted and policemen cursed and the rabble crowded under the arcade to watch the procession of silks and satins, broadcloth and fine linen, filing into the Academy's interior under a shower of sidewalk witticisms, mainly tinged with the brogue.

The pink scalp of the editor of *The Tribune* bobbed through the press toward them.

"Evening, Miss Lydia. How are you, van Ruysdyck? Still with us, I see, Lieutenant. Ormerod, you're the man I have an earful for, and only a few minutes to talk it in."

"You can't talk out here, Mr. Greeley," protested Lydia.

"——'s sake, no," cried old Dick. "Come, come! Let's find our box, and——"

"Can't do it," snapped Greeley. "I've just been stampeded by a pack of delegates from the Republican convention at Pittsburgh. Got to sit up all night with 'em, I guess, and put the paper to bed, too. Sorry, Miss Lydia, but if you'll excuse Ormerod there's a quiet corner over here where I can say what must be said—providing he doesn't up and shoot me like his Southern duelist friends."

"No fear," said Ormerod resignedly. "If you'll excuse me, Lydia? Thanks, I'll be in presently."

Greeley caught him by the sleeve and commenced talking while they were still breasting the inflowing tide of ticket-holders.

"Abe Lincoln was asking about you the other day. When I told him you'd sold out to the Slavers he said you were typical of a lot of young men who've got twisted on the facts."

"I thought you didn't have much of an opinion of him," Ormerod replied.

"Oh, Abe's sound. Not brilliant, but sound. Maybe he'll go to the Senate some day. He's a good speaker."

"Is this what you wanted to say to me?"

Ormerod was amused.

"Course not! I'll gladly take the opportunity to endorse Lincoln's statement, and I'd like to hope that you've learned something from my editorials, but I suppose that's demanding too much."

"I'm not concerned with slavery," said Ormerod stiffly. "Neither is General Walker. We hope to redeem an earthly paradise from barbarism, and in doing it, increase the power of—"

"Oh, fiddle-de-dee, Ormerod, don't gabble like a Virginia tavern orator! Whatever you think you are doing, you are strengthening the Slavers. Yes, yes, I know the North and the East and the West are with you. The rank and file of a democracy are easily led astray. The truth remains, as I say, that your friends in Nicaragua are making certain the election of a Democratic President in the fall and the strengthening of the slave power in Congress."

"I'm sorry," rejoined Ormerod, "but I'm not one of those people who refuse to acquire lands because there are problems attached to them. Slavery or no slavery, this country has got to grow."

"You'll be mentioning manifest destiny next," sneered Greeley. "By Jupiter, man, you're—"

"Look here," interrupted Ormerod, with impatience, "I've had to listen already this evening to the blithering idiocies of an Englishman. Have you no other reason for seeing me than to try to persuade me to turn against General Walker?"

The editor's pugnacious face lightened in a friendly grin.

"I'd do that in a moment, if I could, Ormerod; but I know you aren't the turning kind. That's why I wish you were with us. I knew your father, and Abe Lincoln, who is no mean judge of men, says you have a disposition to think down to fundamentals if you are given a chance, which, God knows, mighty few people can claim."

"You certainly seem to have changed your mind about Lincoln," derided Ormerod.

"Well, maybe I have a little. He's the sort that grow on you. If he had a little more polish— But I'm keeping you, my boy."

Greeley glanced around them cautiously, and lowered his voice.

"I have a report, which I hesitate to publish, that Walker is arranging to turn over the Transit to Morgan and Garrison."

Ormerod's heart sank. This on top of the señorita's letter!

"Yes?" he prompted as Greeley paused.

"I don't know what to do about it," the editor continued. "Is it too much to ask you the relations of Walker and the Commodore?"

Ormerod gulped.

"I will tell you what I know," he answered, "on the understanding that it is not for publication."

"Oh, yes," promised Greeley. "I'm not at all anxious to give your people any more publicity than I must—although it wouldn't help Walker to have it known that he was planning to betray Vanderbilt."

"Among other things, then," said Ormerod, choosing his words deliberately, "I came North to confer with the Commodore regarding the Transit. As a result of our conference, I have advised General Walker to accept the Commodore's terms. I can't very well go into details with you, but I may add that I consider the Commodore has acted very generously toward the Rivas government."

Greeley pursed his lips thoughtfully.

"That's explicit, Ormerod. Humph! I guess Daniel Drew or some other trickster is trying to rig a bear market—it might be Morgan, at that. Humph! Well, we'll forget about it. I'm obliged to you."

He turned away.

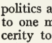
"No use preaching to you, I know, but I wish you were with us, young man. Your father's son would be in better company."

"Thanks for the advice." Ormerod forced a smile. "I like my company, though, and—"

He was going to say that he believed in it, but did he? There wasn't a dishonest bone in Walker's body, he was ready to swear, but his lawyer's mind apprehended with disconcerting clarity the devious methods of politics and finance. What was honorable to one man might seem the foulest insincerity to another.

"Good night," he ended abruptly.

IV



EARLY in March Ormerod was summoned to Washington to confer with a group of Democratic politicians who were endeavoring to persuade the Administration to recognize the Rivas government. The countrywide approval of Walker's venture, coupled with the imminence of the presidential campaign, had aroused considerable anxiety in the ruling party. In the South, too, there was a growing disposition to look to the filibustering movement as a source for winning territory for new slave states to offset the vast Western area, which, farsighted Southerners perceived, was certain to be organized on an anti-slavery basis, whatever the outcome of the struggle in Kansas. But in order to capitalize the sympathy for Walker in the Democratic platform, it was necessary, first, that President Pierce, as titular chieftain of the party, should formally accept the government Walker had set up in Nicaragua.

This whole subject was discussed with a representative of the White House, and Ormerod forgot his misgivings over the Transit when a feasible compromise was reached: Rivas was to recall French, and nominate in his place a native Nicaraguan, preferably Padre Vigil, who, Ormerod ascertained, would be entirely acceptable to the Administration. Vigil would be received by Secretary of State Marcy and presented to President Pierce, and the Democratic platform, to be adopted at Cincinnati in June, would assert the country's endorsement of the campaign for the regeneration of Central America.

Overjoyed by this result,his mind more at rest than it had been for weeks, Ormerod returned to New York on March 13th, and went direct to his law office to collect his mail. The Greytown steamer was due, and he hoped to hear good news from Walker, telling himself optimistically that he should not be disturbed by the very natural efforts which Morgan and Garrison would make to regain the property they had once before maneuvered from the Commodore. But van Ruysdyck met him in the outer office, with every evidence of despair, wringing his hands, purple with rage and dismay.

"This is dreadful, Peter! How can you associate yourself with such treachery? And it's all over the city. They tell me the market has sagged badly, and it's been one reporter after another. Mr. Greeley was in—oh, in a rage! He was quite objectionable. I put him out. Really, really, my boy, I don't know what to say. It's not only you, but the firm. Discredited, discredited, I assure you! I shall never be able to lift my head—"

Ormerod seized him by his coat lapels.

"See here, Dick, what's gone wrong? I'm just in from Washington—"

"You don't know!"

"Certainly not."

"Why, your friend Walker has taken the Transit charter away from Vanderbilt and regranted it to Morgan and Garrison."

So the worst had happened! A pulse beat like a tiny hammer in Ormerod's temple; his facial muscles went numb.

"Is the mail—"

"Tut, tut," fumed old Dick. "Let me go, Peter. I can't stand here all day while you hold me by the coat—too nervous. Yes, by George, never was so nervous in my life. Had the Commodore in here a few minutes ago, so mad he could hardly speak. Said he'd be back again."

Ormerod loosed him.

"I'll be here," he said slowly. "When the Commodore comes, I mean. Now, is there any mail for me?"

"On your desk, but—"

Ormerod made an impatient gesture, and disappeared into his own private office. Yes, there on top of the heap of letters, lay a long, buff envelope, addressed in Walker's precise style. He slit it, with a crackle of wax, and the inner sheet flopped open; but at first the letters danced crazily in front of his eyes. Only by an effort was he able to read the regular procession of words:

> We have received news that Costa Rica has declared war upon us, and consequently, I am recalling you for active duty, as I promised I should.
>
> I am under the necessity of informing you that after protracted examination of Mr. Vanderbilt's proposition I reached the decision that it would be to the better interests of the country to entrust the Transit to operators who possessed a clearer perception of its true place in our affairs. Your report, while rigidly impartial, conveyed to me the impression that Mr. Vanderbilt was inclined to regard Nicaragua as an appendage of the corporation, whereas the real relationship of the two is exactly contrary.
>
> Therefore, President Rivas, by my advice, has decreed the revocation of the Transit charter and its bestowal upon Messrs. Morgan and Garrison, who have evinced themselves to be thoroughly in harmony with our undertakings.
>
> I shall regret it if my decision involves any disagreeableness in your personal relations with Mr. Vanderbilt, but I am sure you will readily grant me that the present is no moment for assigning priority to personal considerations.
>
> I must express once more my appreciation of your services, and as evidence of it take pleasure in enclosing your commission as Colonel. You will return to Granada at the earliest possible date, and resume your work on the Staff.
>
> I am, sir,
>
> Your ob't s'v't,
> WILLIAM WALKER.

The Commodore's voice, hoarse and menacing, rumbled outside as he let the sheet flutter to the desk.

"Jiminy ——, man, stop that ——fool tuttin'! Is Pete in or ain't he? That's all I want to know. You can't tell me nothin' about him. I don't need to have you or any other man—"

Ormerod strode to the door and flung it open.

"I'm here," he said shortly. "I arrived from Washington a few minutes ago."

Vanderbilt tossed his hat into a chair, his thick, dark eyebrows knitted in a bleak frown, his ruddy face hard as flint.

"What's this I hear about the thief you represent—."

"I beg your pardon, Commodore," Ormerod interrupted coldly, "but as you say, I represent General Walker, and if you wish to speak about him in my presence you will have to refer to him with ordinary courtesy."

"Have to?" roared Vanderbilt. "No man says 'have to' to me, young feller."

"Oh, dear, oh, dear," cried van Ruysdyck, running between them. "Do calm yourself, Vanderbilt. Such profanity—"

"What can an honest man do but be profane when he gits swindled by his friends?" demanded the Commodore.

"One moment," interposed Ormerod. "Are you accusing me of deceiving you, sir?"

Vanderbilt frowned across the narrow space that separated them, his eyes fixed on the younger man's.

"No, I ain't, Pete," he answered impulsively. "—— it, I may be easy pickin' for a few slick customers, but I do know a straight feller when I meet up with him. 'Tain't in you to lie or steal. But this Walker's a different breed of hoss."

"Now, hold on, Commodore," said Ormerod. "You are mad. Maybe you have a right to be, but all the same you are mad. Will you believe what I say?"

"About yourself, sure, Pete."

"No, about General Walker. I have a letter from him on this matter, which you are at liberty to—"

"It don't interest me," snapped the Commodore. "Dear ——, boy, didn't I make you a reg'lar business proposition? I told you I'd accept any compromise fair to my stockholders, went ahead and shipped you hundreds of recruits at my own expense. And this —— blasted son of perdition, havin' milked me to the limit, goes and sells out on me behind my back—yes, and to the men I've just licked in a square, aboveboard fight after they'd stolen the same property once before. I'm human, and there's some meannesses I won't stand. This is one of 'em. I'll bust Walker, if it takes every dollar I own, and you can tell him so."

Ormerod shook his head sadly.

"I advised General Walker very strongly to accept your offer, at least as a basis for future negotiation," he said. "My own opinion is that he'd get along better working with you than with Morgan and Garrison; but the Californians are jealous of New York, and—"

He broke off. Of what use to tell the Commodore that Walker's vanity had been pricked by Vanderbilt's original indifference?

"The man's a —— fool, if he ain't a thief, which same, with all respect to you, Pete—and you done right to stand up for your boss—I suspect he is, too. You're well out of his show. This is a fust-rate excuse to drop him."

"Yes, yes," exclaimed van Ruysdyck. "It's exceedingly fortunate you won't have to go back to Nicaragua, Peter. Tut, tut, think if you had been down there when this happened!"

"I sure would feel bad if you were on the business-end of some of the Miniés I'll be shippin' soon," asserted Vanderbilt. "Sweet ——, I jest can't git over wonderin' what Walker was about when he busted into me right now. The Costa Ricans are agoin' to fight him, I hear from Spencer, and—"

Ormerod experienced a sudden revulsion of feeling. He remembered all that Walker had accomplished, and with what puny means. He thought of the wave of thankfulness that had swept Nicaragua after the establishment of the Rivas government, the alert self-respect of Valle's native troops, the heroic daring that had captured Granada.

"You're wrong, Commodore," he remonstrated eagerly. "Indeed, you are. Don't be prejudiced against the man because he—"

Vanderbilt's big nose wrinkled in a derisive grin.

"Say, Pete, what d'you think this is, a Sunday-school class? If a man kicks me in the backside, I turn 'round and smash him in the jaw. I got one interest in Walker, and that is to lay him out. When I finish with him he'll be ruined. ——'s delight! D'you want for me to bow in front of him, and say, 'Please, kind Mr. General Walker, keep my money that you took, and thank you for sellin' me out to the fellers that stole the Transit when I was off on the fust holiday I ever had?' Well, I don't see myself in that pictur', no, sirree!"

"Oh, tut, tut, tut! Quite impossible, quite," deplored old Dick.

But Ormerod's mind reverted to the day he had heard the *thlatter-tat, thlatter-tat* of lance-butts outside the *zaguan* of headquarters in Granada, and the señorita and de Avila had ridden in with tidings of Corral's treachery. She would be heartsick over this business. Alone, apparently, of those around Walker she had appreciated the danger in Vanderbilt's animosity.

He couldn't abandon her, any more than he could Walker. If Walker had made a mistake, she had not. And it was for him to try to remedy his chief's error—any commander was bound to err occasionally, he told himself. No, he mustn't desert her, let alone the hundreds of Americans he had sent to Nicaragua. A new thought, this last! Morally, more compelling than any other.

"I don't blame you for feeling as you do, Commodore," he said. "You have reason to be resentful. But you see, I can't very well go back on Walker just because he has made a mistake."

Vanderbilt's mouth opened—and shut. But old Dick burst out excitedly:

"Nonsense, Peter! Ridiculous, my dear fellow. Why, I never heard of such a thing. You are well out of this mix-up."

"I am returning to Nicaragua on the first steamer," replied Ormerod inflexibly.

The Commodore grinned.

"Oh, no, you ain't," he said.

Ormerod regarded him with some resentment.

"I certainly am. General Walker is my chief, and I am responsible for all the men I have enlisted up here. I'll sail on the first—"

"But there won't be no more steamers," mocked Vanderbilt. "Git that, Pete? The steamers are my steamers. They're under the American flag. Walker can rob me of the Transit property in Nicaragua, but he can't touch what's mine in this country."

And for the first time Ormerod grasped the full measure of Walker's folly. No more steamers! That meant no more recruits, no more supplies. The filibusters would be cut off entirely from home.

"But Morgan and Garrison will buy steamers," he exclaimed. "After a while—"

"Sure, after a while," admitted Vanderbilt. "But it takes a while to buy ocean steamers. They don't stock 'em at Hearn's."

"You see?" pleaded van Ruysdyck. "It would be folly to go, Peter. The Commodore is quite right. Yes, yes, to be sure, quite right, quite—"

"I'll go to Aspinwall," cried Ormerod. "There's a Panama liner this afternoon. I can get some kind of vessel from Aspinwall for Greytown."

He turned on his heel, and started to collect the letters and papers on his desk.

"I've got to go," he said as much to himself as to the others. "They'll need to know about the steamers."

Vanderbilt crossed the threshold of the inner room, and stood there watching him.

"—— me for a packet-rat!" grunted the Commodore. "I like your grit, Pete. Stick by your boss, even when he's a —— cussed idjit! That's the spirit."

"Oh, but he mustn't," clamored old Dick. "Indeed, you mustn't, Peter. Think of the firm! You can't be associated with an open enemy of the Commodore's."

Ormerod grabbed a sheet of paper, and hastily scrawled a couple of lines across it.

"There's my resignation, Dick," he said. "Of course, it's impossible for us to keep up the partnership after this."

"Tut, tut, tut! Bless me, I wouldn't think of—"

"Take it! Say good-by to Lydia for me—and tell Norah Connolly I had to leave suddenly. Oh, yes, and I'll be obliged if you'll assure Greeley I'm not an outright liar."

He turned to the Commodore.

"I ought to tell you about that. He had a rumor that Walker was going to rescind your charter, Commodore. He came to me several weeks ago with it, and I told him all I knew for a fact was that I had sent Walker an offer from you, which had my approval."

Vanderbilt's face became grim.

"Sure you never had no tip on this ahead of the rest of us, Pete?" he queried.

"I heard about the time Greeley came to me that Morgan and Garrison were intriguing against you," Ormerod answered stiffly. "But my informant was opposing them, and I couldn't believe Walker would—"

He shrugged his shoulders helplessly. The grim look left Vanderbilt's face, and he gripped Ormerod's hand.

"Pete, I'm —— sorry this happened. And I'm hopin' you don't git bored in the fracas that's a-comin', 'cause you can be dead sure of one thing—and like I said afore, you can tell Walker so—I'm aimin' to spend every dollar I can lay aholt of to wreck him. I'm in a bad position, myself, and I know it, 'count of havin' helped him. The Administration won't listen to me; they'll say I filibustered as long as it was to my profit, which is God's honest truth, jest between us. And what's more, I know you didn't go to Washington to listen to the wind whistlin' 'round the Capitol dome. One of these days Brother Pierce is goin' to reckonize Walker—if I don't bust him fust. But bust him I will."

The ruddy face set grimly again.

"Cuss me for a Dutchman, if I don't drive the dirty —— to ——-and-gone! I'll find use for Spencer now. He's on his way to New York, and when he goes back he'll have the fixin's of a red-hot dose for Walker. So watch out for trouble, Pete. You're my friend, and I like you, even if you are on t'other side of the fence. But from now on we shoot on sight. See?"

"Oh, this is dreadful," remonstrated van Ruysdyck. "You are breaking with all your friends, Peter. How can you, my boy? What would your father say?"

"The Jedge?" questioned Vanderbilt. "He'd tell Pete to steam ahead, 'cordin' to what he thought was right. And that's what Pete's a-doin'."

BOOK IV

I

AT ASPINWALL, Ormerod caught a fast coaster, a Stonington topsail-schooner, about whose between-decks lingered the unmistakable musky reek of the ex-slaver. Her skipper dropped him at Greytown for a handsome consideration, and the Transit superintendent at Punta Arenas promptly dispatched him up-river on one of the sternwheelers, for he brought the first news of New York's reception of Walker's repudiation of Vanderbilt, and the Commodore's counter-stroke in impounding the New York and San Francisco liners.

The Transit people were frankly disheartened by Ormerod's budget of calamity, which had been preceded by disaster in Nicaragua. One of Walker's new battalions, the Second Light Infantry, had been chewed to pieces at Santa Rosa by the advance-guard of the Costa Rican army of invasion, San Juan del Sur was lost, nine American employees of the Transit had been massacred at Virgin Bay—a place of ill-omen for his countrymen, it seemed to Ormerod; the Transit wharf on the lake shore there had been burned, and President Mora and three thousand Costa Ricans were in Rivas. Walker? He was in Granada, but nobody knew what he was doing or planned to do. There was a rumor that an army of Guatemalans and San Salvadoreans was about to cross the Northern frontier; Don Patriccio had gone to Leon to organize a defense against them.

But at Castillo Viejo Ormerod received more encouraging tidings from the slender garrison of Americans who held the old fortress. Yes, the Second Infantry were beaten; they were beaten so badly Walker had disbanded the battalion. But what could you expect? They were mostly foreigners, one whole company of Germans, another of Frenchmen; Schlessinger, the commander, had proved a coward. The morale of the rest of the filibusters was uncontaminated.

All they wanted was to get at the enemy. And as soon as Walker made certain whether the principal menace was to come from the North or the South he would strike; almost all the army was concentrated now in Granada. If Ormerod hurried he might be in time for the battle. These casual Westerners, a platoon of Jenkins' Rangers, had no concern for such trivial matters as Commodore Vanderbilt and ocean-steamers. They "reckoned Californians could git to buy steamers jest as easy as any —— millionaire in New York."

At Fort San Carlos Ormerod found the *Virgen* embarking a detail of Rangers under Jenkins, himself. The scout was undemonstratively glad to see him.

"Waal, Pete! I might have knowed you'd horn in for the big doin's."

"Have we any chance?" Ormerod inquired dubiously. "From what I hear—"

"We got all the chances thar is. That talk about an invasion in the North is a wrong smoke. Nothin' in it. The Costa Ricans are left holdin' the bag, and the general is agoin' to crowd 'em into it."

Jenkins, too, took little account of Vanderbilt's enmity.

"Cornelius Garrison kin git steamers same as Cornelius Vanderbilt," he affirmed. "You watch. We'll mebbe have our backs to the wall for a while, but we got the army weeded out now, and the shoot-and-run boys put away, and next time we fight thar wont be no rotten furriners to holler, 'Swave kee poot!' and leg it like the hull Sioux nation was after 'em."

"What was the matter with the foreigners?" Ormerod asked. "Most of those I sent had served in their own armies at home."

"Shore, Pete, but they ain't used to this kind o' fightin', if they ever fit a-tall. Its one thing to be in a 'tarnel big army, with a feller on each side o' you, touchin' elbows, and know thar's as many o' you as thar is of t'other war-party; but it's —— different to be strung out to meet twicet or five times as many ag'in you."

"What about the Irish?"

"Oh, they're mostly all right. Of course, thar's a heap o' scum that ain't no use, no matter whar they come from. But yore Irish ain't yaller, even if they don't know how to shoot. Thar was one little feller, name o' Gilligan—"

"Mike Gilligan!" exclaimed Ormerod.

"That's him. He was a sergeant of a New York company in the Second Infantry. When the Dutchmen and the Frenches broke him and a few more tried to hold the line, and they say if it hadn't been for them the Costa Ricans would have corraled the lot. The general made him a lieutenant."

"That's fine," said Ormerod, in a warm glow of satisfaction. "But what did you mean when you said the army was weeded out?"

"The general discharged every feller that couldn't speak English," Jenkins returned succinctly.

"That must have reduced the strength a lot."

"Better have fewer men you kin count on than a passel o' yaller-bellies that wont fight."

They reached Granada in the afternoon of the next day, having stopped off several villages on the Chontales shore to take aboard cattle and stores which the Rangers had collected; and the alert bearing of the guard of Rifles at the quay convinced Ormerod that Walker's position was still far from hopeless. Valle, riding in at the head of a patrol of lancers, met him in the street, and leaned down from his saddle to scrape his cheek with greasy mustaches.

"To zee Gil Gonzales we 'ave been, Don Pedro," he boasted. "Behol' my lance." He flicked a few bloody hairs from the sharp spearpoint. "Zat was a *hermanitico*—a w'at you call heem?—*sí, sí!*—a —— Costa Rican. I see heem! Ha! I shout! I rrrrride! I shofe heem wiz my lance. He yell. Pouf!"

"Good for you, Chelon," laughed Ormerod as the fat old Indian illustrated the slumping of an impaled body.

"Soon we keel zem all," proclaimed Valle, riding on.

Recruits were drilling in the Plaza under the lofty towers of the Parochial; barefooted Indians slouched along, the men in dirty white, the women in colorful *naguas* and *guipils*, usually revealing a generous six inches of bronze skin between the two garments; townsmen and *calzados* from the neighboring countryside lounged in front of shops and *posadas;* an occasional woman of Castilian descent flitted past, mantilla waving in the breath of the northwest trade. Ormerod thought of the señorita, and hastened his pace.

At headquarters Fletcher Cabot, a captain's bars pinned on the collar of a blue flannel shirt, welcomed him joyously, and ushered him into Walker's office in advance of a delegation of black-coated *politicos*, who hovered in the anteroom like vultures waiting by the roadside for the life to expire in an abandoned horse.

"Make 'em wait," whispered the ex-cabby. "All they want is army contracts and soft jobs."

Ormerod was shocked as Walker rose to receive him, so pale and drawn was the filibuster's face.

"You have been ill, General," he exclaimed.

"A bout of fever," Walker assented. "But I can not complain; illness has been general amongst us." A shadow crossed his face, and he sighed—a greater demonstration of emotion than Ormerod had ever marked in him before. "General Disease is a more potent enemy than the Legitimists or Costa Ricans. He takes the best of my officers, Colonel. That is the most discouraging factor against us. So soon as a man is seasoned and trained, ready to become a valuable subordinate, he sickens and more often than not, dies. But this is not a very considerate greeting for you, who have left the health of the temperate zone to brave our dangers with us. I take it very kindly of you."

Ormerod seized this opening for an expression of faith he had determined to make in the course of their first interview.

"It is only proper, General," he answered, "that I should tell you I am in thorough disagreement with your transit policy. I have told Mr. Vanderbilt that I do not admit you have acted in bad faith toward him, inasmuch as you are a free agent and have the right to do what seems good to you. But I do feel that your policy is not wise, but harmful."

Walker heard him, without any expression of feeling, the freckled face and gray eyes as impassive as a mask; that one flicker of sentiment for his dead officers had drained the filibuster's emotions.

"You are entitled to your own opinion, Colonel," Walker conceded levelly. "But why do you consider it harmful for me to select an operator of the Transit upon whom I can rely in preference to a man who regards our enterprise as simply an opportunity for adding to his personal fortune?"

"I don't think you are altogether fair in judging Mr. Vanderbilt, sir," replied Ormerod. "But aside from that, you don't seem to realize what an enemy you have made of him."

"What harm can he do me?" asked Walker.

"He says he will ruin you—and he has a way of doing what he threatens. He'll spend every dollar he has to do it, too."

Walker shook his head slightly.

"Mr. Vanderbilt has a masterful personality, and I can easily understand that he impressed you, but I assure you he is merely one of a host of enemies we must overcome. He can not hurt us so much as our Central American opponents."

"He can supply them with arms," warned Ormerod.

"Which we must capture."

"And he has already shut you off from communication with the east and west coasts," pursued Ormerod. "He has docked all his steamers."

"I expected as much, of course," Walker answered placidly. "It is annoying, but not so important as it might be, since the Costa Ricans temporarily control the Transit. Mr. Garrison assures me that he and his partner will shortly have an ample fleet to maintain competition with the Panama route, and likewise, supply us with recruits."

"And in the meantime?"

"In the meantime, Colonel Ormerod, we must take care of ourselves. I am marching to attack Rivas tomorrow. The Costa Ricans out of the way—" he waved one hand as if to crush a mosquito—"we shall be able to await patiently the restoration of our connections with San Francisco and New York."

"The Commodore was perfectly willing to compromise all the points you raised, General," Ormerod persisted stubbornly. "He wanted to work with you, had formed a high opinion of you, believed in what you were trying to do. He did practically everything we required, except—"

"Except comprehend the true relationship in which he stood toward Nicaragua," Walker interrupted. "I am sorry, but your own report, with what you had told me previously, convinced me Mr. Vanderbilt was not a man with whom I could work in the circumstances. He is a very influential financier, I admit, and a power in the United States, a big man; but his very importance would tend to make him intolerant in his attitude toward us."

"He said that two big men could make the wheels go 'round, and that you and he—"

"A specious statement, Colonel Ormerod." Walker's tone was friendly, but firm. "I do not agree with it. A task such as I am attempting can be achieved only by one man, working unchecked and unhindered. I can not permit myself to be distracted by a civilian of Mr. Vanderbilt's disposition, accustomed to having his own way and obsessed—I speak without intent to offend, sir—by a sense of his own importance. Egotism is of value while it is under control. Let it escape the curb, and it becomes a menace to its possessor."

Ormerod did not reply. He was conscious again of the depression which had overwhelmed him in New York. It was useless to struggle against the will of a man whose own egotism was as ironclad as Walker's. He realized that his attempt to reconcile the filibuster and the financier had been hopeless from the beginning. Well, the less cause for self-reproach, then.

Perhaps Walker read his thoughts, for the little, gray-eyed man continued presently:

"You must not think I have been unappreciative of the position in which you were placed by my decision. I understand the peculiarly intimate relationship you entertained with Mr. Vanderbilt, and I am deeply sensible, sir, of the loyalty which prompted you, notwithstanding—and when you also doubted the wisdom of my policy—to return and risk your life in my expedition."

"It isn't my own feelings I am thinking of, General," protested Ormerod, "but the expedition."

"And I must repeat," answered Walker, "that the expedition is none the worse for Mr. Vanderbilt's hostility. We are encompassed by enemies; every other State in Central America is controlled by Legitimists. On the San Juan recently we intercepted a Costa Rican diplomatic pouch containing an offer from the British Government to provide arms to use against us. Our own government is cold to us."

"No, no," exclaimed Ormerod. "Washington is turning toward us. Pierce is ready to receive Padre Vigil as minister, and the Democratic convention will endorse your enterprise."

"This is official, sir?" questioned Walker almost eagerly.

"Unofficially official," corrected Ormerod. "I worked out the program with a group of Democratic leaders and a spokesman of the White House the week before I sailed from New York."

"Then, sir, you have laid the foundation for our success," cried Walker, his pale cheeks warming. "This is news of infinitely greater importance than the enmity of a rich man whose income we have reduced. If Washington supports us we can laugh at the intrigues of the British and the Legitimists. You must go to de Avila at once. He starts this evening for Leon, and shall secure Don Patricio's approval of Vigil's nomination."

"Does the señorita go, too?" Ormerod asked with studied unconcern.

"Yes, I must have them both there." Walker's brow clouded. "To be honest with you, I do not entirely trust Don Patricio. A good man, but weak, and he is surrounded by people who are jealous of me. So I am sending the de Avilas to keep watch on him. Canedo goes with them to command in Leon; he has been promoted Colonel."

"Is he safe?" asked Ormerod.

Walker shrugged his shoulders.

"What Nicaraguan is safe—for us or for any side?" he answered. "That is the curse of this people; its racial instability. I sometimes think we must ultimately adopt a drastic policy of repopulation. They will not work; they will not be faithful. Perhaps—but neither of us has time for philosophy at this moment. See de Avila, and then report back to me. Ah, sir, if the Nicaraguans were all like him and his daughter we could proceed to organize the country with philosophy instead of gunpowder."

II

CANEDO was leaving the Casa de Avila as Ormerod came up the street, and the New Yorker saluted him with blunt friendliness.

"I hear you have been promoted. Congratulations, Don Rafael!"

"Oh, there are still a few Nicaraguan soldiers," glowered Canedo. "Now and then one of us must be noticed."

"Are you dissatisfied?" asked Ormerod, nettled.

"If I were," sneered the Nicaraguan, "I suppose you would be willing to carry my case to the prætorian prefect, eh?"

"General Walker is always ready to—"

"Tchut, man! General Walker thinks only of how he can use us Nicaraguans without trusting us too much."

"He is giving you command of Leon," reminded Ormerod.

Canedo flushed angrily.

"Yes, so that he wont have to take me along when he marches against the Costa Ricans. He wants his Americans to have the credit for the battle. Bah! I know how his mind works."

"He's taking Valle—"

"Oh, Chelon is an illiterate old Indian, who fights for whoever pays him most and gives him the best chances for killing."

And Canedo stamped off, banging his saber-scabbard ostentatiously on the paving stones. Ormerod shook his head thoughtfully. Were there many Nicaraguans of Canedo's opinion? The outlook was not very propitious, if there were; and he was sufficiently open-minded to perceive the fundamental justice of their attitude. You could not replace a weak race with a stronger, and avoid cruelty and unfairness, spiritual as well as physical.

But he forgot such abstract reflections as he entered the *zaguan* of the Casa, and a barefooted Indian servant bowed humbly before his Northern bulk and held wide the inner door to the corridor which connected the spreading wings of the rambling pile.

"*El Señor* de Avila?" he inquired stumblingly.

The servant flashed white teeth in a grin of apprehension, and pattered ahead of him along the corridor to the door of the salon, halting at its threshold with a graceful gesture.

"*Aquí, aquí,*" purred the man.

The huge room was in semi-darkness, and it was a full minute before he caught his bearings. A scant patch of sunshine barred the desk at which de Avila was accustomed to work, but the señorita, not her father, sat there, her head bent over a file of papers.

She had not heard him enter, but as he advanced across the tiled floor she looked up, with a startled murmur.

"*Jesu!* You, Peter!"

The light in her eyes made him choke.

"I was afraid," she cried. "I thought you might not come back—after my letter—after—"

"I had to come back," he answered.

She sprang lithely to her feet, and somehow—it was as if the two were parts of one machine—they found each other's arms, hungrily. Her lips lifted to his, her eyes were pools of fire, misty, translucent.

"Oh, Peter! Oh, Peter!" she sobbed. "I called myself friend, but there is no friendship between us. This love is next to hate. Oh, if it were but hate! Anything, anything, but love!"

"What there is we have," he said thickly. "We are young. Let's make the most of it."

"Yes, yes, the most of it," she assented, and her face yearned up to him.

He drew her closer, and the words tumbled disconnectedly from his tongue.

"I thought of you always. It was for you—do you understand?—for you—everything. I said to myself that I must come back, and help you save the plan—because only we two can save it, darling. And when we have saved it—"

Her face sobered, and she pulled free of him.

"You recall me to my senses, Peter. No, no! Let me go. We are not little people—and I have a part to play—"

"Play it with me," he urged. "The general would welcome our marriage. It would cement the country."

"Not for long." She evaded his embrace and sank back against the desk, her hands smoothing the disordered pile of her hair. In her cheeks the color had faded; the fire of her eyes had lost its softeness. "Indeed, I am right, Peter. We decided this once before."

"But not forever," he objected.

Her glance met his, straightly and honestly.

"Perhaps not forever," she admitted; "but certainly for now. You are fresh come from New York, so you can have no conception of the whirlpools of intrigue that have been set afoot by the Legitimists, yes, and by some Democrats, who either are ill-disposed to General Walker or resent the share in the government he has allowed to the Legitimists. I tell you, we are in greater danger today than when our one hope was the fifty-eight men of the *Falange*."

Despite himself, Ormerod was influenced by the sincerity of her declaration.

"Things are bad enough in New York," he acknowledged. "Commodore Vanderbilt is out to destroy us. His money will be at the disposal of our enemies. Spencer probably is on his way to Costa Rica to tell them so."

"I feared as much," she replied sadly. "I said all I could, but General Walker had made up his mind, and Ometepec would have heeded me no less."

He remembered his errand at the Casa de Avila; tried to relieve her misgivings.

"But Washington is prepared to recognize us," he said. "I was to tell your father, so that he could discuss it with President Rivas."

Her face brightened.

"Tell me. Father has gone to the *Intendencia*. That is the bravest news since we captured Granada. Can it possibly be true?"

"Oh, yes."

"I feel a load off my mind. Dear friend—"

He caught at her hand.

"Will you make a mock of friendship?" he challenged hoarsely.

She let him smother her fingers with kisses, then drew them gently away.

"I am at fault," she admitted. "Forgive me, Peter. But you see, your news is the strongest of all reasons for keeping us apart. Don Patricio must appoint Padre Vigil, and it will be for my father and me to convince him that it should be done. Can't you conceive how our enemies would whisper if I urged the Padre as your wife? How much influence would my father have left if he were father-in-law to one of Walker's most trusted officers? No, no, the time has not come to talk of a union of American and Nicaraguan."

He smiled wryly.

"You and I seem to typify the two races," he said. "We are united, but separate; one, but two; together, but apart."

A faint screaming of bugles drifted across the house-tops from the Plaza.

"The advance-guard is mustering for the march to Rivas," she answered. "It is through battle that we shall unite."

"If we win—"

"Am I one to require a promise of?" she rebuked him.

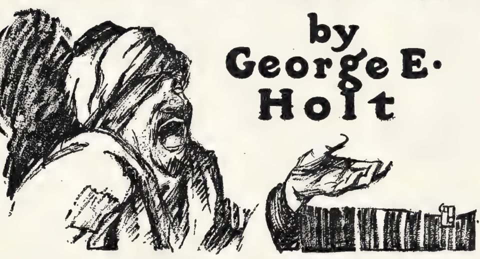
And when he would have spoken again she stooped and kissed the hilt of his sword.

"Day by day I shall tell my beads for you," she said softly. "*Vaya con Dios, mi caballero.*"

TO BE CONTINUED

GIFTS OF ALLAH

by George E. Holt



Author of "Moorish Gold," "The Tool of Allah," etc.

Woe to him who prays and in his prayers is careless.—AL KORAN.

OCCASIONALLY Allah takes it into his head to grant a wish or a prayer very promptly and literally. Hence it behooves one to be exceedingly explicit in such requests. Otherwise Allah, obviously being too busy to make allowances for loose talk, the letter of the desire may be most amazingly fulfilled to the sincere regret of the wisher.

As an instance of this, take the case of Achmed el-Larbi. It is true that magic was also concerned, but this in no wise changes the fact that Achmed el-Larbi sought gifts from Allah and received them and, though they were precisely what he had asked for, found them not at all to his liking.

Achmed el-Larbi was a beggar by trade. For twenty years he had sat during business hours at the Place of the Three Gates in Tangier. There the whole world of Islam—which is the world of Pharaoh and Moses and the Arabian Nights—and part of the world of Europe passed before him. From such a stream the profits were considerable. Achmed el-Larbi, operating on a law of averages, knew precisely the time at which to raise his bandaged face and open his mouth in the long-drawn, sonorous wail of "*All'arbi—All'arbi,*" which means "Alms, in the name of Allah, the Compassionate."

Wherefore the inside of his black begging bowl was polished to silver by the impact of coins, and the outside shone like ebony from the clutch of his hands upon it through a score of years. And although Achmed wore a patched and filthy brown *jelab* and a bandage over one perfectly good eye for business reasons, this *jelab* was quickly changed when he reached home in the evening for luxurious garments of French velvet and silk. For Achmed was rich. Into his bowl, in the course of two decades, a fortune had been tossed by careless, charitable or merit-seeking hands.

Now, in Morocco wealth is a very serious danger. Officials, from the town tax collector to the Sultan on his throne, are greedy. Therefore the wise man is always poor, and Achmed el-Larbi, following this custom, had kept his door locked upon his private luxuries, and had spoken to no one of his wealth. Had he continued along this path of wisdom, he would have been wiser, but interesting events would not have come to pass.

The truth of the matter is that Achmed el-Larbi had been nursing a dream—a dream which, as he sat at the Place of the Three Gates and cried for alms or, clothed in velvet, sat upon silken cushions and smoked *keef* in a jeweled pipe, grew like a child who is nursed, until it became big enough and strong enough to cease to be a dream and to be a motive. Even as his riches had grown, so had the dream, until at last it walked out of dreamland and seized Achmed el-Larbi and set his feet upon a strange road.

But before you hear the story of Achmed el-Larbi, it is desirable that you know at least a part of yet another tale, and some little concerning yet another person, lest you overlook the fact that in order to work his will upon mortals, Allah must make use of mortals as his tools. For, while the Black Magician without doubt utilized Achmed el-Larbi for his own purpose, there is no doubt in my mind that the Black Magician was in the same manner utilized by Allah for his purpose; which was the bettering of the soul of Achmed el-Larbi.

Now this Black Magician or, as many called him, the Master of the *Djinnoon*, was a huge Soudanese negro who at this time dwelt in Tangier unostentatiously in the second story of a little house in the Street of the Coppersmiths. *Alladin* of the Magic Lamp lived on the first floor, but nobody knew it. His real name, or at least the name by which he called himself, was Habib, and he was noted far and wide for his works of magic. A million million *djinnoon* did his bidding; the forces of nature obeyed his commands; no secret was hidden from him and all wisdom was his. Hence Habib was very prosperous and very much looked up to, and had many friends in high places who, no doubt, were of some little assistance to him in foretelling the future. He had quite a clientele among the European diplomats stationed at Tangier, and this helped, as they did not know he understood French and English. Habib would attend one of their social affairs and produce brass tea-trays and pots of boiling tea and cups and saucers and little cakes and sugar out of the air. They would drink the tea—it was very good tea which Habib bought of Maclean & Co., the English grocers—and have a most charming thrill. And Habib would go home with gold in his *shakarah* and a substantial increase in wisdom as the result of using his ears.

Among those who took counsel with Habib the magician was Sid Omar, the Tangier *khalifa* of his Majesty the Sultan. Sid Omar had not found his *khalifa-ship* unremunerative, but his master, the sultan, had of late found himself in need of funds, and so had levied an extra general assessment upon all his officials. This had inconvenienced Sid Omar, making it highly desirable that Allah point the way for him to replenish his resources. The tax had been heavy indeed. And it had to be paid. Abd-el-Khader ibn Malek, basha of Arzila, had been unable to pay all, wherefore the sultan had taken what he had and then deprived him of office. Wherefore, in his extremity, the *khalifa* sought the counsel of the Master of the *Djinnoon* and promised him many things if either he or his spirits could render the financial aid so necessary to a continuation of his political activities. Habib listened and pondered.

"You say that the bashaship of Arzila is now vacant?" he asked.

"Yes," made answer the *khalifa*. "Two are bidding for it. The Vizier will let the bidding continue for some time, of course."

"There may be—" began Habib, but closed lips upon his words, and dismissed the *khalifa* until what time he should again summon him.

AND within an hour Allah guided to the house of Habib the footsteps of Achmed el-Larbi, the beggar.

Habib greeted him, motioned to a seat upon the cushions and said solemnly—

"Tell me your dream."

This was nothing in the world but a figure of speech; do not all men have dreams? But it made an impression upon Achmed. Wherefore he shortly told Habib how matters stood, while the magician listened silently.

"And now," the beggar wound up his tale, "you know that which is my dream, that which my heart desires."

Habib was silent for a space. Then, as thinking aloud:

"To exchange the rags of a beggar for the broadcloth of the basha, the golden bowl for the book of taxes, the seat at the Three Gates for the *casbah* of officialdom, wealth for honor and peace for war. That is what you wish. That is what you tell me you have prayed to Allah for."

Achmed nodded agreement.

"I have prayed, and I desire from Allah the gift of position and honor and power, so that men may not jest and say, 'Ho! here comes Achmed the beggar. Guard against lice!' but so that a *maghazni* may precede me shouting, '*Balak! Balak!* Make way for the master.' Is it too much to wish?"

"No," made answer Habib gently, "it is not too much to wish."

There was a little accent in the last word.

"And not too much for the *djinnoon* of the Master Habib to accomplish?"

"Nor that," said Habib. "Still, it will take much money."

"That I have and am willing to use."

"My instructions must be obeyed to the letter."

"Assuredly," agreed el-Larbi.

"And you are sure that these things are all you desire?"

"All—all," said el-Larbi. "Position and honor and power."

He almost chanted the words.

"Which are of no value without the mantle of Allah's protection," murmured Habib almost to himself.

Achmed el-Larbi nodded with absent mind. He was thinking of the day when, wrapped in a snowy *k'sa,* he should ride a spotless white mule, fat and perfectly gaited, through the market-place, preceded by a guard who should clear a path for him through the throng, shouting, "*Balak!* Make way for the master!"

The voice of Habib drew him back to the present.

"Therefore," the magician was saying, "you must do thus and so without fail, else my *djinnoon* can not aid you."

And the instructions he gave to the now attentive beggar were lengthy, detailed and explicit. Also a very substantial sum of money was suggested and agreed upon.

Thus it came about that Achmed, the beggar, in conformity with these instructions, bestowed his seat at the Place of the Three Gates upon a carefully chosen successor, to whom he said that he was going to a far country and would not return, burned the patched *jelab* and eye-bandage of his profession and, upon an appointed day, passed through the market place and main street of Tangier wrapped in a snowy flowing *k'sa,* mounted upon a spotless white mule which bore trappings of silk and embroidered leather.

Now, of course, no one recognized Achmed, the one-eyed beggar, in the person of this rider, who was manifestly rich and important; even though no *maghazni* walked before him, armed with iron-tipped staff, crying, "*Balak! Balak!* Make way for the master!" Wherefore there was much speculation and questioning among the populace. And, as Habib had anticipated, there very naturally sprang up a wild tale which, appealing to the imagination, was commonly accepted as the truth.

This story was that the unknown was a very wealthy gentleman from Algeria who had come to Morocco seeking a home and opportunity for the investment of large sums of money. Habib, the magician, was asked promptly about the matter and, smiling inwardly, gave his approval to the current belief. Thus it became a fact to the public mind.

Upon the heels of this subject of public comment came another of even greater import. For one day a *rakkas* came with a letter for Achmed, or rather, for Sid Mohamed bel Achmed el-Hassan, from the Vizier, who had sent it through the hands of the *khalifa,* who forwarded it through Habib, the magician. This letter offered Sid Mohamed the bashaship of Arzila for a specified sum.

Then the spirit of Achmed grew glad, and he praised Habib and his *djinnoon* and all their works, and he also blessed Allah for his response to his prayers. Hastily, lest the Vizier should change his mind, he dispatched a courier with the specified sum, which was more than half his remaining fortune, and his acceptance of the honor bestowed upon him by the Vizier and his royal master, the Prince of Believers, Commander of the Faithful. At which the Vizier laughed a little, sent the money on to the Prince of Believers and issued a proclamation announcing the appointment of Sid Mohamed bel Achmed el-Hassan to be basha of Arzila.

THUS it came about as Achmed, the beggar, had desired, and he rode from the basha's mansion to mosque preceded by no less than two *maghaznis,* armed with iron-tipped staffs, who cleared a path for his dignity, shouting, "*Balak! Balak!* Make way for the master!" Also he sent another rich gift to Habib in acknowledgment of the value of his magic and loudly proclaimed the wisdom and power and beneficence of Allah. Habib smiled, and his smile strangely resembled that of the Vizier. And Allah no doubt, having attended to the urgings of Achmed el-Larbi and, having granted his prayer in strictest conformity with its requests, considered the matter finished. At any rate it shortly became manifest that he had no further interest in the affairs of Sid Mohamed bel Achmed el-Hassan.

For thirty days Sid Mohamed rode daily in the streets of Arzila, enjoying his new-found honor. For thirty days he urged the collection of the taxes of the district by his deputies, for thus should he be reimbursed for what the office had cost him. For thirty days he sat daily in his office and administered justice in accordance with the law. Position and honor and power were his.

Upon the thirty-first day after his elevation the basha of Arzila mounted his mule and rode to Tangier. He was not preceded on this occasion by even a single *maghazni* to clear the road and cry, "*Balak! Balak!*" and he rode swiftly, with the folds of his *k'sa* pulled down to conceal his face. This covered one eye, but Sid Mohamed, the basha, could see with half his eyes as well as could Achmed, the beggar.

In Tangier he hurried to the house of Habib, the magician, who greeted him with a smile, motioned him to a seat upon the cushions beside him and waited until he should speak. For a little while Sid Mohamed sat silent. Then he reached into his richly embroidered *shakarah* and drew forth a handful of gold, which he tossed into Habib's lap.

"That," he said, "is all that is left of my wealth. It is yours. Only—and you have kindness and humanity in your heart—cause your *djinnoon* to make me again Achmed el-Larbi, the beggar."

"But honor and position and power!" said Habib. Although he smiled, it was a tolerant smile. "For them you prayed to Allah, and to secure them my *djinnoon* worked marvels."

"*Aweely! Aweely!*" mourned the basha. "That which I asked for I received. But it was not what I desired. Only a week since the Vizier took from me the last of my wealth. Yesterday he demanded more. Unless I give, the doors of the prison will close upon me. Nor is he the only one clamoring for gold. The *khalifa* demands constantly. I am a ruined man. Honor nor position nor power are like summer winds. And wealth is like the thistledown. *Ai! Ai!* Verily Allah in jest gave me that for which I prayed."

"Not in jest," corrected Habib. "But I observed that you did not pray that these gifts should be wrapped in the mantle of his protection, and doubtless he thought—"

"*Ai! Ai!* That is the reason I have been punished, no doubt. I—I forgot. My desires blinded me. But now—"

"But now?" encouraged Habib.

"Now I desire only to return to my seat at the Place of the Three Gates and to resume the life of the beggar, Achmed el-Larbi. For that I seek aid of your *djinnoon* and for that I pray Allah."

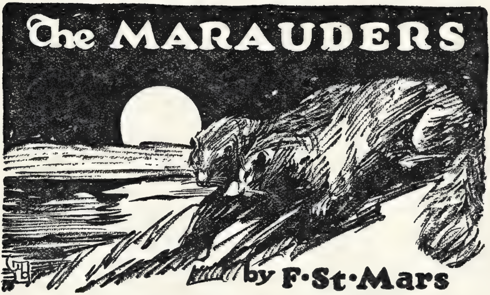
"For that only?"

Achmed corrected himself hastily.

"And that he may wrap the mantle of his protection about the beggar."

Thus it came about that his Excellency Sid Mohamed bel Achmed el-Hassan returned suddenly to Algeria, not having found the climate of Morocco good for him, or so Habib said, when the *khalifa* sought him in regard to the missing basha of Arzila. And Achmed el-Larbi, with patched *jelab* and bandaged eye and ready bowl, appeared suddenly before the beggar who sat at the Place of the Three Gates and drove him away. He had not found the far country to his liking, he said.

That is why, if you should go to Tangier and pass through the Place of the Three Gates, you will no doubt hear a sonorous voice calling "*All'arbi! All'arbi!*" and will see Achmed, the beggar, holding out his worn black bowl for your tribute, for the protection of Allah is about him like a mantle.



The MARAUDERS

by F·St·Mars

Author of "The Last Trail," "Gray Ghost," etc.

IT IS possible that when Henry D. Bateman took his eccentric self to live in England he was unacquainted with the extreme law and order of that land. He acclimatized animals, foreign animals. That was his hobby. Sometimes they bit him, more often they died before they bit him, but occasionally they got away, when they generally bit somebody else and died after.

Two minks came to Henry D. Bateman, freshly coerced from somewhere about the region of the Adirondacks. They knew nothing at all about acclimatization, but everything about freedom. For which reason, perhaps, they bit Henry D. Bateman so badly on the finger at feeding time that he forgot to padlock their cage, and they departed in the middle of the night without saying anything at all.

Very circumspectly these two New World beasts scuttered down through the tangled woods, which led from Henry D. Bateman's house to the river, though by what magic they knew where to find the water, which they loved, is quite beyond the knowledge of man.

Across the moon-flooded spaces they hurried. In the shadows they loitered, picking up and analyzing the various scents of the night. They should have been scared out of their senses, but minks are not built that way. They were built on the weasel specifications—long, low beasts, about twenty-six inches from nose-tip to tail-tip, the color of rich chocolate, whose legs were short to absurdity, whose bodies, rippling in arched curves as they moved, showed lithe grace as few can show it and whose faces were the faces of fiends ungraced by any softness at all.

A trout in the river, hanging head to stream in the swirl of an eddy, was aware of two dark shapes taking the water from the opposite bank. He took them for otters and went, and when a trout goes, it is like the shooting of a falling star. Then that trout regretted having moved at all, for the dark shapes were the minks, and the silver-barred gleam of the fish flashed to their little red eyes.

Followed a swirl, a hissing, bubbling, boiling rush, and chaos.

That trout was nearly a foot long, and what he could not accomplish in the way of dazzling rushes, lightning-flash turns and streaking dives was not worth accomplishing.

But he was not steel, and these beasts that hunted him were—or seemed to be. He could not keep skating about that river at the speed apparently of an electric flash forever. Even a trout has its limits. And in the end they cornered him, those minks; cornered him in a hollow beneath an old willow and slew him with great swiftness. Then they removed to the bank and sat down just above the reach of the whispering water to dine.

Now, when the minks were about half way through their repast, a chain of bubbles began somewhere in the blackness, about some tangled roots on the opposite bank and shot across stream at them in a little, seething line.

Next instant bounced up a head from the current—a flat, sleek, smooth head with enormous whiskers, and it dripped. For a moment it regarded them with little eyes, cruel as their own, eyes which reddened with anger in the pale green moonlight. Then it sank, and from first to last it never said a word.

Followed a huge swirl, as if a very big fish were in a hurry below, and after the swirl the straight, scrambling, spray-covered charge of a long, low, glistening body.

The old male mink shot clean up in the air as this unexpected horror tore up from the water beneath him. The female mink side-twisted to one side with incredible speed.

There was no time to think, scarce time to act. The male mink came down again—he was chattering and swearing abominably—plump on the creature's back; not because he wanted to, but because he couldn't help himself. And where he fell he buried his gleaming fangs; for although the mink may be many things that are not nice—and he smells appallingly—he is no coward.

This charging, silent foe was a soured, rough old dog-otter, not a pleasant enemy by any manner of means. He may have been, including the tail, forty-two inches long, certainly not less. He looked more, and his agility would have shamed a cat.

Then they fought. How or in what manner exactly is not known. The water-voles who were watching can not tell you the details even; and their beady eyes are quick enough. The owls could make nothing of it at all. There was a whirl of long, low, snaky bodies, a smother of leaves, a flying tuft or so of fur, a flash here and there of white fangs, and all the time the terrifying stench given out by the minks hung on the air like oil on water. There was no getting away from it; it sickened even the watching wild folk.

All at once a water-vole, far up the bank, dived with a resounding warning *plop*. Another nearer to hand followed suit, and then many more did likewise. A rabbit scuttled frantically past and an owl flapped silently and suddenly into the night.

Without sound and without comment all the wild folk that had gathered, or stopped by the way, to see the great fight were melting away in haste, melting before—

A twig snapped, almost like a pistol shot, under the hollow, arched aisles of the dim, still trees, and instantly, as at the holding up of some unseen umpire's hand, the fight ceased.

So suddenly ended that battle that it pertained almost to magic. There was just a mighty, treble, instantaneous plunge, a three-fold spurt of up-flung water, a surge, a swirl, and—nothing. Nothing but a man, a keeper, standing on the bank, looking at a half-eaten trout and listening to the lapping flop of the back-wash and wondering what had happened, what manner of woodland tragedy this was that he had missed.

LATER during the morning that followed he found the remains of five more fish picturesquely disposed along the bank of the river. The otters got blamed for that—how was this man to know about minks—and henceforth the otters were extremely unhappy because of the numbers of traps which they found, or which found them.

Next night the minks came sliding downstream abreast looking for trouble. It was a dark night, save at rare intervals when a gash in the clouds let loose a cascade of pale green moonlight, which revealed all the black secrets of the night quite suddenly and vanished again in an inky void. It needed no light, however, to give away the exact spot where some wild duck had business among the reeds. The birds were talking one to the other as if no such things as foes existed, as wild duck will all the world over.

The minks checked and backed water. They tested the air and found that a fox was ambushed among some reeds to the right; also there was another smell, new to them, and two eyes like live coals, which were the property of a poaching cat. But there was no taint of otter; therein lay their chief concern. They had acquired a lively respect for otters as a class by reason of sundry angry red gashes about their persons as mementos of the previous night's battle. Then the minks dived.

For a space after they had gone, so silently sunk to the depths, nothing happened. At least, nothing happened in the water. But out of the bushes along the bank crawled a shadow—the keeper. He marked down the wild duck by sound. He raised his gun, aiming, and waited for a moonlit interval. Nothing heard him come. It was too black to see him and, being to leeward, nothing smelt him.

At last the moonlight came leaping over the tree-tops and struck the water. It revealed two ducks and a drake. The keeper squinted along the barrels of his weapon, but he never fired. Something went wrong —not with gun, but the ducks.

Soon there came a gurgle from under an inky smother of holly on the opposite bank; a gurgle and a dripping sound as of something leaving the water. Followed a snarl and a crunching noise, and the keeper swore. It was only the minks who had dived under the wild duck, grabbed each a leg and, after drowning the quarry, retired to the fastness of the hollies to hold high carnival.

But, as has already been said, that keeper knew nothing about minks, and so next day there were more traps to entertain the otters, since the man put the murder down to their door.

Three hours later the minks were in difficulties again.

Hunting still down-stream, they had come upon an otter and had fled inland for a space. Not that they were afraid of the other beast; minks are not much troubled with fear of anything that walks, but because they saw no fun in getting mangled without reason.

Being in England, they could not go far without striking a farmhouse and yard. They saw it—a piled blotch of deeper blackness in the blackness of the night. And since they were cursed with the abiding curse of the weasel clan, which drives them curiously to prospect all strange things, they prospected this place. And the first thing they ran up against was a fox. They barged into him as they turned the angle of a wall, and thereafter ensued an argument.

The fox, being more scared than angry, slashed one of them over the shoulder; it left a neat, long gash, that slash. Followed an infernal chattering, and the fox ran away with the female mink firmly pinned to the top of his shoulder and the male undulating snake-like at his heels seeking a hold.

In a few minutes these two marauders, long, low, curving shadows, half-seen, half-guessed in the murky gloom, were back again.

They awoke a pig, which grunted suddenly and caused them to jump quite a yard with fright. They nosed into a manger, nearly terrifying its owner, a mare, out of her equine senses, and they ran over the cows' food mixed ready for the next day and polluted it with their appalling smell beyond all hope of any sane animal's eating it.

Later they fell in with the official cat of the place; and out again in about five seconds, because a cat is most fastidious over the matter of smells, and when it scented those minks it seemed within dangerous proximity of blowing up.

Finally they came to the barn and the rats of the barn, and things happened.

All they saw of the interior from the hole through which their lithe forms had squirmed was an inky void, scented with the dry, comforting smell of corn and peopled with tiny lights in pairs—always in pairs—which raced up and down in companies. They knew these to be rats by the sound and, if anything were needed to make them more certain, by the smell.

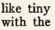
Then the cat came. By pure chance of course, for she had no wish to encounter those minks again. She came from the opposite end of the barn in the shape of two big, round orbs of green fire. She must have had some secret entrance of her own. And the rats went. At least there followed two seconds' pause; then all eyes turned in the direction of the minks, where happened to be the largest exit.

It takes a plucky beast to stand up to the combined rush of a hundred or so scared and desperate rats. Probably the minks would have got out of the way if they could, but they would not run, and the rats were in a hurry. Result—chaos.

The rats, almost before they knew it, found themselves mixed up, packed in a stifling mass in a deadly, dumb shocking encounter with some beasts that chattered and fought like mad things and smelt appallingly. It was only a matter of thirty seconds, that battle, because the minks were shouldered aside by sheer force of numbers, as a wave shoulders aside boats, but it was a wicked enough fight while it lasted.

Then, almost before one knew it, came silence. And lo! Most of the rats were gone.

I say most advisedly because some there were who could not go. The minks and their beautifully polished fangs had seen to that. After that the cat went away, also, because two chattering things with red eyes like tiny live coals, who were nearly mad with the lust of fighting, chased her from end to end of the barn as she had never been chased before and certainly hoped never to be again.



IT WAS a quarter of an hour after the barn episode that these two wandering marauders, these minks, hit upon the fowl-house. It is wonderful, by the way, how night prowlers generally do finish up at the fowl-house; our friends found it by scent, I think. They were very careful for, being on land, which was not their natural element, they were, if one may so term it, rather at sea.

A rat's hole gave them an entrance, and a rat coming out, holding an egg under his lower jaw and against his breast, gave them pause, but only for an instant. A rush, a squeal, and the rat was past praying for. The egg, also, was soon only a shell. Next they turned to the fowls.

The air within was hot and the smell was not nice; but two fowls roosted on a low perch. That alone concerned the minks.

Followed a leap, a thud, a dry rustle of feathers and a squawk; but it was none of the minks' pleasure that the rest of the fowls should set up a small-sized riot. They fed within a whirlwind of feathers whilst the inmates rushed about and screamed with that helpless abandon peculiar to fowls and sheep. They killed two fowls, but touched only one, for some one came, and they went away in a hurry; they had to, for the some one brought dogs to the number of three.

Next morning the farmer put it all down to the fox, who suffering accordinly for a felony he had not, for once, committed.

Gliding down through the woods as dawn flecked the blue-black sky with steel-cold gray, the minks sighted the otter. He was returning from some blood raids of his own. An expedition which can not have been successful, for his temper was awful, and he gave chase.

He was, however, even more at sea on land than the minks. They, at least, undulated in more or less graceful curves; he shambled. But they all three got along at fair speed. You see, the otter's feet were webbed completely, the minks' only partially so. This may make a balance in favor of the otter in the water, but the opposite on land.

The minks did not wait. They flew. Down a beaten track—a game track—went they; and the otter whistled at their heels in disgust at the stench they left behind.

At the bank the track stopped at a slide, such a chute as is used by all otters time after time for generations. Here the minks swerved. They had no love, no innate hankering for tobogganing as the otters have. They preferred to take the water in a less dramatic way farther along the bank.

Then came the otter—angry, puffed and seeking a fight. Down the slide went he. Under the water his long form vanished in a spurt of up-flung spray. And under the water he stayed. There was certainly a little foam, a great swirling.

After a bit bubbles appeared, but not the otter. He was in a trap which had been placed with cruel cunning under the surface at the bottom of the slide. It was indeed the irony of fate that he should be killed, drowned in his natural element, his realm, but fate had no conscience that way.

Now, it is a curious fact that no man killed those minks or even saw them from first to last and, after the otter had gone, there was not a beast left powerful enough to accomplish the double slaughter. Yet next evening there they lay, both together, side by side on the bank of the river, red-bronze figures on blood-splashed grass by reason of the setting sun, and they were quite dead. Stiff, cold and horribly still, with that look of eternal unconcern on their grim, almost diabolically cruel faces, which is worn by all the lifeless ones, and by them alone.

There were two neat little round punctures on the near forefoot of each mink, and there was a little red adder—not the brown, but the more venomous and rarer red variety—torn to shreds under a holly bush fifty yards away. What he may or may not have known of the matter, he can not say, but the little beady-eyed water-voles who peep and peep and bandy all the gossip up and down the river-side could speak the truth about it if they were not so shy, I guess.

JUSTICE

A Complete Novelette

by Arthur O. Friel

Author of "Hard Wood," "Twenty-four Hours," etc.

WARPED by torrid sun, sieved by torrential rain, half smothered by stealthily surrounding bush, a silent house glooms on a jungled shore. Under its sagging palm roof hive wasps. Outside its drab clay walls flit gold and ebon orioles and jeweled humming-birds, and hither and yon drift exotic butterflies. Behind, where plantain and tree-melon still grow in a ruined garden, robber monkeys raid the untended fruit and, from time to time, themselves are raided by some wandering jaguar. Other life there is none, save an occasional snake, an infrequent vulture and the ever present plague of stinging sand-flies.

A short pistol-shot ahead and aside, two somber rivers merge; the one, the untamed Rio Vichada, here ending its long crawl from the Andes across the plains of Colombia; the other, the grim master to which four hundred wild streams pay tribute, the Orinoco. On both these flowing roads travel men, poling doggedly up or paddling easily down, in ponderous piragua or in narrow dugout canoe; on the Orinoco, mud-faced *mestizos* of varying degree of mongrel blood, with, sometimes, a bronzed but clean-skinned Spaniard; on the Vichada, swart, stocky Indians, wary, wily, slow to appear and swift to vanish—the aboriginal Guahibos.

To all these voyagers, civilized or savage, the deserted house at the river junction offers a ready camp; and, since no other habitation may be found for leagues around, one would logically expect river-farers to halt there for meals, sleep or partial shelter from storm. But none ever does so. Whether white, brown or mixed-blood, each casts a narrow glance at the half hidden *casa* and passes it by.

And in passing, each growls something like an execration, his eyes going from the shrouded walls to the waters of the other river. The neatly garbed Spaniard and his peons, the tattered breed and his fellows, all peer up the inscrutable Vichada as if seeking there sign of some hated menace. The clouted, leather-skinned Guahibos in turn scowl toward the Orinoco as at some treacherous monster. Yet none of these travelers fears the river at which he gazes. Nor are his muttered words a curse, as a casual listener might infer from the tone of their utterance. Instead, they are merely the name of a man; an ordinary name, apparently devoid of any cryptic meaning, just as the lone house seems barren of any interest. And the name is Jorge Padillo.

Jorge Padillo. Two words, no more. Yet, voiced by Spaniard or semi-Spaniard, that name evokes wordless growls freighted with animosity toward the Guahibos. And uttered by Indian tongues, it brings to cold brown eyes a glint of hereditary hatred for

---

"Justice," copyright, 1926, by Arthur O. Friel.

Spaniards. To each race it is a symbol, as is the crumbling *sitio*. And because of that name and all it implies, brown and yellow-white man alike shun the spot where once lived Jorge Padillo. So it has been for a decade and so it will be until the name is forgotten and the house is dust.

Ask of the Orinocan the tale of Jorge Padillo and the answer may, perhaps, be reasonably truthful. But it will not be the whole truth, nor free from racial distortion. Ask of the Vichadan Indian—if he can be coaxed within speaking distance—and he will give no reply at all. It is a subject on which the Guahibo does not talk. Thus the real story will remain untold unless, by rare good fortune, the inquirer chances to fall in with Sixto Scott. From him only can be gathered all the truth.

A paradox, this Scott. By ancestry, half Scottish and half Spanish—son of an American soldier of fortune and a belle of Bogotá, Colombia. By birth and education a *caballero*, eligible to the most exclusive circles of a proud aristocracy. By nature a dreamer, a far-seer, yet a shrewd observer of material things and a canny reader of men and motives. In physique a giant. All in all, such a man as might well command an army, represent his country in important diplomatic posts or even rule the entire republic as president. Yet he is but a petty trader in Indian hammocks. He dwells, not in the lofty city of the Andes, but on a nameless mosquito-infested tributary of the Vichada. Pure white, he has neither white partner nor white wife; his habitual companions are the untutored Guahibos, and his women—of whom, he casually admits, he owns several—are Indians. He likes these primitive people and their simple way of existence, he says, better than the intriguing men, fickle women and complex civilization of his own world. So, except for his annual voyage down the Orinoco to sell a huge cargo of hammocks to the merchants at Ciudad Bolívar, among the Guahibos he stays.

That is his own careless explanation, which one may wholly believe or not. Some Orinocans there are who grin derisively at it—although not when he is near—and advance other reasons for his way of living. The hammock business is merely a blind, some aver; the rogue is really working a secret gold mine somewhere up in the Andean foot-hills, and slowly but steadily catching enormous wealth. Others intimate, by the expressive flick of a finger toward the jugular and a shrug of the western shoulder, that he departed Bogotá in haste and finds it more healthful to live beyond the ken of the governing authorities; an insinuation which seems partly corroborated by the fact that he deals with merchants of Venezuela, not of Colombia. Still others, more romantic, would have it that a faithless señorita lies behind his abandonment of the scenes of his youth. However that may be, none disputes the essential fact that Scott thoroughly understands the Guahibos; else he could not have lived so long. And it is this knowledge of the Indians, coupled with the sense of justice inherited from his American father, that fits him to narrate fairly the story of Jorge Padillo.

So it was that he told it to me one starlit night while our common camp-fire smoldered on the western shore of the Orinoco. Chance-met, bound in opposite directions, we were sharing the same camp-site, at which we had arrived simultaneously about sundown. I was heading upstream, intent on conducting a bit of exploration among the mysterious mountains of Guayana. He was on his way to market, his *piragua* crammed to bursting with sacked hammocks. Now our boats, moored at the bank by bark-rope cables, nuzzled each other in friendly fashion; and we two commanders lolled in our hammocks and talked. On either side rested our crews, fraternizing not at all; for mine were *mestizos*, his, Guahibos; and between the differing races stood an invisible but tangible wall of hostility. But we two were white men and, to some extent, of the same blood. On that river of few whites and fewer Americans that was enough. And by and by, while the high stars twinkled and the low fireflies floated and flashed, Sixto Scott told of the ruined house which I, the newcomer, soon was to pass and scan as intently as any native. Drawling a bit, hesitating now and then as he felt for an American expression long disused, he said:

THAT is quite true, sir. When the men along this river tell you there is no justice, they speak the truth for once. How can there be justice when judging lies in the hands of petty politicians whose only object on holding office is to feather their nests? And how can you expect justice in the big territories where not even such officials live, where no law can be enforced and where any brute with a gun can do the most revolting things unchecked? No, *hombre*. You might as well expect to see a snake protecting a baby bird or a *tigre* caressing a monkey, as to find the top dog giving a square deal to the under dog in these parts.

But yet there is justice, too. I was talking about the sort of justice man gives to man, or ought to. There's another kind of justice, though, bigger than any man or men. And it works out in the end, every time. It's slow, yes. Too slow, usually, to do much good to the poor —— who get killed or maltreated before it takes effect. But it gets there. And it arrives in queer ways, too, sometimes—so freakish that unless you know all the steps on the road you'll fail to recognize the justice of it. Yes, and quite likely you'll condemn the man or men instrumental in its execution. If you have any prejudice against them, you certainly will.

Take the case of Jorge Padillo, for example. Any man along the Orinoco can give you the main facts about him. But will he tell that story as an instance of the workings of justice? Oh, no. His yarn will be an illustration of the treachery of those savage dogs, the Guahibos. It will simply go to prove, as he will tell it, that the Guahibos are bloody beasts, always ready to turn on a white man. *Sí, señor*, every cursed Guahibo this side of —— ought to be shot or, still better, beaten to death, dying slowly and suffering much. Why? *Válgame*, to make the Indian respect his betters! An Indian, you know, is only an animal. Animals have no rights. They exist merely for the use of white men. If they dare to bite us or even to snap at us, shall we not punish them, torture them, kill them? Of a certainty!

What? The señor says the Indians are human and should be so treated? *Cra! En verdad, el señor es loco!*

That, sir, is the white man's side of it. I mean the kind of white man you will find around here. Well, I am a white man. Whiter than most in this section, but I know the Guahibos well, and I can sing a different song about them. They're no angels, but no more are they devils. Neither are they animals. Their brains are not as good as yours and mine, naturally, but they're human, very human. And if you give them human treatment, they will pay you back in the same coin. They will always be a little suspicious of you, maybe. But show them you're a good fellow, play fair all the time, humor their superstitions a little and you'll get on. Abuse them and you won't get on long. Something will happen. And when it does, it will be sudden.

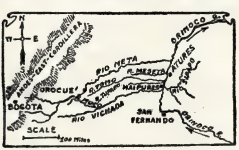
But now about Jorge Padillo. I want to tell you about him. Yes, I knew him. His *sitio* was, and still is, at the mouth of the Vichada, above the rapids of Maipures. You will see it when you pass. It was there before I came down from Bogotá. Already he had established his business of trading in the *chinchorros*, that is, the hammocks, made by the Guahibos up the Vichada. And after I took up the same trade, it came about naturally that we met. We never were friends, but the fact that we were in the same line of business didn't make us enemies. We reached an agreement dividing the territory between us, Jorge taking the lower part of the river and all its tributaries, while I held the upper part, where I lived. So, as far as the trade was concerned, there was nothing for us to quarrel over, and at first we got on without the least trouble. But I will admit that I had no great liking for him. His ways and mine were not the same.

For one thing, there was his past record, which I learned on my first trip down this Orinoco. No doubt you have heard about Coronel Funes, whose cutthroat army controled the whole upper river for eight years and killed a man a day? Of course. One hears of him everywhere, though he is safely dead now. Well, at this time Funes was at the top of his power, having his seat of government at San Fernando de Atabapo and keeping a herd of whispering spies who caused many a poor —— to be executed for the sake of his possessions. And for a long time one of those spies, I was told by a Funes man, was this same Jorge Padillo.

He had brought about the death of more than one important rubber trader, I heard, through visiting that man's workings, observing how well he was doing and then laying information against him with Funes. The man was plotting against the coronel, he would report, and was smuggling in rifles and cartridges from Brazil. Funes would promptly have the unlucky trader executed and seize all he owned, then give a percentage to Jorge for his faithful work. So

Jorge accumulated a very decent little pile of *dinero*. After awhile, though, Funes soured on him and told him to quit San Fernando if he wished to keep his head. Jorge went *pronto*. Then he set up his *sitio* at the Vichada mouth, spent some of his blood-money on trade goods brought from Bolívar and started his hammock business. For some reason or other, Funes let him alone. Perhaps Jorge kept on his good side by continuing to act as spy in a small way, sending him any river gossip he could pick up.

Well, that sort of thing was all right enough, maybe, for that time and place. Life was a cutthroat game up here, and a man kept his head on his shoulders by any means that came handy. If he could make a little money and keep it, too, he was clever. Still, that way of existing would never appeal to me. No, *hombre!* Before I would accept a man's hospitality, then go and get him murdered and take money for it, I'd quit the country, even if it meant starving in the bush afterward. And although you never could put much faith in what one Funes man said about another, this story about Padillo must have been essentially correct. Jorge himself, the first time I met him, let me know he had influence with Funes.



We came together at a Guahibo settlement about half way up the Vichada. I was there to parley with the Indians about hammocks and so was he. I had already heard of him, but he knew nothing about me because I was newly come. The first thing we did, naturally, was to look each other over. He was short, stocky and strong-looking, with yellow skin, thick black hair and mustache and cunning black eyes. Dressed in wrinkled blue jeans, alpargatas and a heavy brown velour sombrero. I was wearing a well-cut white suit made for me in Bogotá, and a high-grade *jipijapa* hat, the kind you call "panama." Those good clothes probably made him size me up as a government official on a trip of inspection or exploration. Anyway, his manner was effusive until he found that I was after hammocks. Then he froze up.

"Ah, that is a horse of another color," he said. "This is my river, *hombre.* I was here before you. So, much to my regret, you had best go to some other place."

"I like this place well enough," I said. "And the Indians tell me you have not traded in the upper river."

"Not yet," he admitted. "But I am working up to it. And I was here—"

"I know you were here first," I broke in. "But I am first on the upper river. I will keep my grounds. You keep yours. So we shall each have our own."

We looked at each other a minute. And then says he with a queer gleam in his eyes—

"This is not a healthful river for you, *amigo.*"

"Who will make it unhealthful?" I asked.

"Perhaps *el coronel* Funes," he answered, smirking. "I have the ear of *el coronel*, as perhaps you know. And if he should send men here—"

"He would find both his ears burning, and you might lose both of yours—at the neck," I retorted, growing a little warm. "Funes is Venezuelan. This land is Colombian, and so am I. Let your Funes send armed men into Colombian territory, and he will find a nest of hornets on his neck. And I will see to it, my honorable friend, that you are kicked clear across the Orinoco. Then I shall have the whole Vichada to myself."

That was, as you say, a mouthful. It was commonly known that Funes, who had come into power by shooting the governor of the Territorio de Amazonas, wished to be officially appointed to the same post by the Venezuelan president. In this he never succeeded. But, because he dreamed of it, he was always particular not to overstep the Amazonas lines. And the question of the boundary between Venezuela and Colombia, as you may know, is a very touchy subject on both sides of the border. There was a little war over that matter about twenty years back, and the Venezuelan army got thrashed. Now if Funes should send his men into Colombia to shoot a Colombian, he would be likely to stir up not only one, but two nests of hornets and be stung by both. And well he knew it. So did Jorge know it. And after a minute or so of fast thinking he became jovial and put out his hand.

"Pues," he said, "let us be friends. I was only trying you to see if you were a man of mettle. This is a long river, and we both can do well on it. So do you keep to your half and I to mine, and we shall get on."

"Exactly what I was saying," I agreed.

And we shook hands. Somehow I did not care much for that handshake, and when I heard more about him, I had all the less desire to touch him. But in this country one takes men as he finds them, and what they may have done to others doesn't matter much as long as they do nothing to you. And I will say that Jorge played fair in the matter of our trade. He kept off my grounds, and when I passed among Funes men on the Orinoco trips, none molested me or my goods.

Each in his own territory, we prospered. I gave my Indians a square deal and they did likewise by me. Jorge bullied the Guahibos of his section, but not too far, so he got on well enough with them. There was no good reason why he should not. Yet sometimes as I thought about what men said of him, it seemed not quite fair that he should succeed so well after what he had done. If the tales were true, he had been a snake, hissing into the ear of his master things that cost the lives of better men. There should be a punishment for that. The relatives of his victims ought to take vengeance or Funes ought to kill him for luck, as he killed more than one of his tools. Or something else ought to happen to balance things. But nothing of the kind came about. And his blood-money, instead of bringing him bad luck, made more money for him. In the course of time he would get rich enough to open a big trading store in Bolívar and live on the fat of the land. Where was the justice in all that?

That's what I thought then. But since then I've thought otherwise.

II

THERE was a chap in the Funes army who didn't belong there. More than one, for that matter. Every now and then some poor beggar of a peon, who was a decent enough fellow at heart, got roped into the gang and had to stick there. His boss would be murdered, and in order to keep on eating he would have to become a *soldado.* Usually he would intend just to go through the motions, avoid killing anybody, and watch for his chance to desert and escape down the river. But the gang took precautions against that. The next time there was a prisoner to be beheaded they would cover the new recruit with their guns and make him swing the machete. If he didn't go through with it they shot him. If he did, he thereby tarred himself with the Funes brush. He knew what the federal officials would do to him after that if they got their hands on him, and he knew his own crowd would shorten him by a head if they caught him trying to get away. So he was between the devil and the deep sea, and had to stay where he was.

But this chap Gregorio, now, was a bit too decent to stomach the brutal work of that outfit. And one day he appeared on the Rio Vichada, all alone, paddling a short curial and watching everything like a hawk, with his rifle ready between his feet. He had traveled about a hundred miles up the river when I met him, and I doubt if he could have gone a league farther against the current. He was all in.

I was cruising around, and had been up a *caño,* a side creek, you understand, to visit some Guahibos. I came out of that stream into the river just as Gregorio was about to cross its mouth. It was a surprize to both of us. For about one second we stared at each other. Then his paddle dropped, and he had his gun on me like a flash.

Ever look down the bore of a cocked .44 Winchester with a wild-eyed man behind it? *Hombre,* it looks as big as a cannon. I could almost see the bullet start to spin down the rifling at me. But I had sense enough to sit still and speak calmly.

"Buen' dia', amigo," I said. "Why so swift with the gun?"

He squinted through the sun-glare at me and my two Guahibo paddlers, who had shrunk down as far as they could. Then he let the rifle sink, though he still kept muzzle up and finger on trigger.

"Hola!" he croaked, in a hoarse tone. "Who are you?"

"Sixto Scott," said I. "And who are you?"

"Who is Sixto Scott?" he snapped back.

"Sixto Scott? Well, he is a white Guahibo, perhaps," I grinned. "And he trades in Guahibo hammocks. If you are here for the same purpose, there is no trade for you. Jorge Padillo and I have taken all there is."

To that he made no answer at once. He just sat looking at me and drooping more and more. Thin-faced, he was, and gaunt. Bent over as if he had no stiffening in his backbone, tired to death and nearly starved, if his hollow eyes and set mouth meant anything. After a minute or two he laid his gun on the bottom, half reached for the paddle, then let it lie.

"I want only one hammock," he said then with a strained smile. "*Cra*, I could sleep in it for twenty days! But I can not buy it or anything else. Could you give me a mouthful of food?"

"Many mouthfuls and a good hammock to rest in and safety, unless you have harmed the Guahibos along this river," I told him. I saw now that he was fleeing from somebody. "On a *caño* a few miles down is an Indian place where I mean to stay tonight. Will you come along?"

He hesitated, sneaking a look back downstream. Already we were drifting away from the creek where we had met.

"Of whom have you fear?" I demanded so sharply that he answered at once.

"Funes."

"Funes? *Ajo!*" I laughed loudly. "Funes, my faith! Here Funes is nobody. You are in Colombia, *hombre!*"

"He has a long arm," he answered. "And a deadly hand. Ten thousand curses on his filthy soul!"

He straightened up, and for a second his voice rang with hate. Then he drooped again.

"A long arm in Venezuela," I corrected. "It does not reach to this place. *Bien.* You have not harmed any Guahibos?"

"What? Harm those savages? Ho! No, of a truth. I have kept as well hidden from them as I might. I have hardly touched land since entering this river." He looked doubtfully at me and at my boys. "Are these Guahibos?"

"Right," I nodded. "Decent fellows, too, though I see that you have heard bad tales of their race. So are those below here. Well, are you coming?"

He hesitated again, studying all of us, then picked up his paddle.

"For a meal and a rest I would lie among *tigres*," he said. "*Vamos!*"

So we struck off down the river side by side. As we went he told me that his name was Gregorio. He said no more than that, and I asked nothing further. He needed all his breath for the few miles of work ahead.

When he entered the new *caño*, I offered him one of my paddlers, but he refused, and kept trailing us unaided. The current was weak, and my canoe broke it for him, so that he managed to stick it out to the end of the trip. I rather liked his grit. I liked his face too. Not at all handsome, but honest and strong. The thought came to me that perhaps he would make a good companion if he cared to stay in the Vichada country. He was almost white, and there are times when it is pleasant to talk to one of my own tongue. Besides, he could be of use to me in various ways if we were congenial. But first I wanted to know more about him.

He was so done up that his legs almost gave out from under him when we went ashore at the settlement. But he followed me without hesitation, though watching the Indians narrowly. The Guahibos looked him over closely in return. And I watched all of them. I saw that none of the Vichada people recognized him, proving that he never had been there before, and I saw that, although he had been dodging these "savages" on his way up, he showed no fear of them now that he met them. It's often that way, I think. People are more scared by shadows than by flesh-and-blood actualities.

Well, we ate the best meal the Guahibos could put together for us, and then he tumbled into a hammock and passed away. I took a siesta myself through the heat of the day. When it grew cooler the Indians came to me to talk, and we exchanged all the news we had. Gregorio never heard a word of it. He was still asleep when I went to bed for the night, and I doubt if he moved before daylight.

In the morning, though, he came back to life. He ate twice as much as I did, and I eat a man-sized breakfast, let me tell you, and that meal and his eighteen hours of sleep and a strong *cigarrillo* put him on his feet again. He grinned around at the Guahibos as if they were lifelong friends of his, and they grinned back at once. Those "bloody beasts," as the average man calls them, are quick enough to laugh if given a chance. Then he said—

"*Cra*, if these *gente* are savages, I should much rather live among savages than among some people who call themselves *civilizados!*"

"So say I, and so I do," I answered. "These folk are fierce enough if wronged, but who can blame them for that?"

He looked lazily at me and back at them and once more at me.

"Is it truth that you live in this wilderness all the time?" he asked.

"*Sí*. There are worse places for a man to live."

"*Cra*, do I not know it? That —— town of San Fernando for one, that snake-nest of the murder-mad Funes, that—"

He spat a string of red-hot curses through his teeth. And when he had cooled a bit he told me why he cursed that place and that man.

It was a common enough story except for the end. He had been foreman in the rubber workings of one Marcos Quesada on the Alto Orinoco. A fine old man, he said, who treated him very well. This Quesada was murdered by a detachment of Funes men commanded by one Salas, and his employees were impressed into the army of the coronel. After that Gregorio was forced to kill prisoners under pain of being shot dead in his tracks. Not only one prisoner, mind you, but several. He loathed this work, and that was why Salas made him do it. This Salas, it seemed, was an especially cruel beast, and he enjoyed forcing Gregorio into these killings. But it cost him dear in the end. One dark night Gregorio did a little killing without orders, and the fellow he killed was Salas himself. He shot him dead. Then he got away in a little canoe.

Most chaps in his place would never have dared to try to escape, let alone killing their officer. And if they did, they wouldn't think of any other way out than straight down the Orinoco, where they would either be drowned in the rapids or shot by the Funes garrisons at Maipures or Atures. But Gregorio had a head on his shoulders. He came down the Orinoco, but instead of staying on it, he turned off on the Vichada and struck toward the Andes. So he dodged the bad water and the worse men. But he was going, or thought he was, right into the country of savages who would cut him to pieces on sight. And he was traveling with no food. So far as he knew, he had about as good a chance of ever reaching the mountains as of flying to the moon. But he was game to take that chance. The boy had nerve.

"Good for you!" said I when he finished. "And now what do you want to do? Keep on going west?"

"*Sí*," he agreed. "Every mile I can put between me and that —— of a Funes will make me feel easier. They say that no man ever escapes him for long. His tools are everywhere."

"Not in Colombia," I disputed. "Forget Funes. In the first place, he does not know where you are, and he has no way of learning, unless— Hm! Did you stop at the *sitio* of Jorge Padillo at the *boca?*"

"The hammock trader? *Sí*. I had to stop there to eat. But he does not know who I am or anything about me."

"Hm!" said I again. "Well, it does not matter. If Funes ever learns that you came in here he will give you up as a bad job. And now I will help you on your way if you like. I live a long way to the west of here, and you are welcome to come to my place, and from there I can give you a good start and a plain road to Bogotá. Or, if you like this section well enough to stay in it, perhaps I can give you something to do."

"Many thanks to you, señor," he replied gratefully. "I have no place to go, no money and no friends. And perhaps when I see your place—"

He stopped, and we left the matter there. By this time I had taken a real liking to the fellow. I liked his eyes, his voice, his manner and his spirit, and I decided to keep him with me as long as he cared to stay. But I said nothing of this until we were at my own *sitio*.

That was a number of days later, of course. In the meantime we grew much better acquainted. By that I mean that we came to understand each other well, not that we told all about ourselves. In truth, we told nothing at all and asked nothing at all except about the things around us in which we both were interested. To this day I do not know Gregorio's last name or where he lived before he became the foreman of Quesada. Those things do not matter when man likes man. I liked Gregorio and he liked me, and that was good enough for both of us.

So, when we had reached my home place and rested and gone about among the Guahibos of that settlement, I said:

"Well, Gregorio, I should like to have you stay here, if you will. You can be my assistant in gathering the hammocks from the Indians and remain in charge here while I make my trip to Bolívar, which I shall soon do. As for pay, I can not promise you any regular wage, because there will be no regular work and I have no regular income. But I will see that you get what is right. And if you stay a year or more you will have a fair share of my total receipts. Or if you would rather move on, I will take you to the Rio Meta, and from there you can reach Bogotá by the regular trails. Say your say."

He looked at me with a queer little smile, and then out through the doorway. And said he:

"I say I stay, señor. And do you know the name of that girl out yonder with the big gourd?"

Now the girls of the Guahibos are not very good-looking as a rule, at least to the eyes of us white men. But here and there you can find one not half bad. And the little lady outside the door was one of those few. And Gregorio was a young fellow and all alone. And, what's more, this same girl had already shown a good bit of interest in him as we walked around. In fact, she had no logical business loitering outside my door just then. The big water-gourd in her hand was the emptiest kind of bluff. So when I took it all in I had a good laugh.

"So the wind blows that way," I said. "Gregorio, you waste no time. I know the girl, yes, and she's very much all right. Say the word, and I will arrange it with the *capitán*."

"The word is said." And with that he walked slowly out, looking steadily at the girl. Toma, her name was. She looked shyly back at him, and then began walking away, not too fast, just drifting along. He drifted after her, as if going nowhere in particular. But they didn't fool anybody. Some women began to snicker and gabble among themselves and some men grinned and some looked sour. Maybe those fellows had designs on Toma themselves. But nobody did anything about it, and Toma and Gregorio faded away into the bush for awhile. I went to speak to the chief, and he called in the girl's father and, after a little palaver, it was all fixed.

Then there was a lot of noisy dancing that night in the moonlight, and the usual Guahibo hullabaloo over a wedding. And at sunrise Gregorio and Toma were man and wife according to custom. He had a good eye, that boy. There were no more girls like Toma around those parts—barring my own, of course. I claim to be a good picker myself.

So he settled down to live among the "savages", perfectly contented. And Toma was proud as a peacock, and I was hugely satisfied. So everybody was happy. It was not much as Gregorio had expected it to be when he took his desperate chance in starting up the Vichada, or much as it would have been if he had not happened to meet me. Now and then we used to speak about this and laugh. A good joke on Funes, we called it, on Funes and all his gang, sweating and swearing while they tried to locate the *soldado* who had plugged his officer and skipped.

Yes, it was a good joke. But there was one thing we both forgot. That thing was Jorge Padillo.

III

IT WAS only a couple of weeks after I adopted Gregorio when I started to collect my hammocks. In fact, my chief purpose in making the trip on which I met him had been to estimate the number available and speed up my unfinished work. The Guahibos now were accustomed to making these nets for me and, although they are not very industrious as a rule, they can turn out a surprizingly big lot of those things in a few months if they will. So all those who wanted trade goods from me had been toiling away pretty steadily for a long time—as steadily as Indians ever work, I mean—and now there was a good load waiting to be picked up.

By the way, do you know how they make those beds? They take the fibers of the *cumare* palm, shred them up into fine threads and then twist the threads into cord by rolling them down their bare thighs with the heels of their hands. They ball the cord and then, on a framework, they make a wide-meshed net. That's the body of the hammock—just cords running crisscross, like a seine. We call the thing *chinchorro*, meaning "fish-net", for that reason. Then they fasten on the fan-shaped hanging-ropes and the hook-loops, and it's done.

People outside call these things grass hammocks, probably because they're the color of dead grass, but they're no more grass than I am. Grass would go to pieces *pronto*. The palm fiber is tough as bad luck and strong as hate. I'll give you one of mine before you move on in the morning. Keep it until that canvas thing you are using has rotted from mildew, and then you can learn what a real hammock is. For service there's nothing better in this country than the Guahibo *chinchorros*.

Well, I got out the big *bongo*—freight canoe, you comprehend—that I keep for my business, picked some good paddlers and started. Gregorio came with me and Toma, too. I had not meant to take her, but both of them looked so sober when I broke up their honeymoon that I changed my mind. She was small and would take up only a little room, and I could send them both back when the cargo began to crowd the boat. So off we went, visiting the various settlements and taking aboard the *chinchorros*. At each place I told the *capitán* of the tribe that Gregorio was my subchief and that they would see more of him in future. With that voucher from me, he was made welcome everywhere, and Toma was treated as respectfully as if she had been my own woman. Gregorio got on famously with them, too, on his own account. So everything went smoothly, and when I finally left the pair I had no fears for them.

We said *adios* at a place far down the Vichada, near the end of my territory and the beginning of Padillo's. They had come much farther than I had intended. Both of them had developed a fondness for traveling, and as the *bongo* filled up, they took to paddling a small curial picked up at one of the settlements, keeping the big boat company. And I let them trail along because I thought it just as well to let Gregorio become acquainted with all the Indians thereabouts. But finally I said:

"Now, *compañero*, you have gone far enough. There is neither sense nor safety in traveling farther. Beyond lies the land of Padillo, where I never trade. And you are already far from our headquarters. So now you turn back. Keep an eye on things while I am gone. Anything you want at Bolívar?"

"*Sí*," he said. "Cartridges for me and a pretty dress for Toma. Nothing more."

"Good enough," says I. "You shall have them. Good luck!"

"Luck to you, señor," he responded.

And I cast off the ropes and started on toward the Orinoco, leaving the pair of them standing among the Indians of the last village in my land—Gregorio grinning and leaning on his battered old rifle, Toma watching me soberly, as Indian women do when a friend goes. That they would find their way home all right, I had no doubt at all. They knew the road, the Indians all were friendly and there was small chance of any serious accident coming to them. So I put them out of my thoughts and gave my attention to what lay ahead.

From that point onward I made no stops at Indian places. I kept looking for Padillo, thinking he ought to be gathering his hammocks also, as we usually collected at about the same time. But I saw nothing of him until I reached his *sitio* at the Vichada mouth. There were his boats at the bank, all ready to start, but not a hammock in them. It was midday, so I halted there to eat. Inside the house I found Jorge lying down.

"You are late," I twitted him. "Here I am on my way to Bolívar, and you without a single *chinchorro* aboard. I shall swamp the market before you get in."

"I have been sick," he grumbled. "Fever. But I shall start collecting *mañana*. Have a drink."

He nodded toward a jug of white rum, and I put a shot of it where it would do the most good. Then I ate, my own food brought from the boat, while he stayed in bed. We talked of various things. And suddenly he asked—

"Do you know anything of one Gregorio?"

"Gregorio?" says I with a wooden face. "Who is he?"

"A vagabond. A tall man with a sharp nose and a set mouth. He passed up the Vichada alone in a little curial some time ago."

"Oh, that one. *Sí*. I met him. He went north to the Meta by way of the Muco. Probably he is in Bogotá by this time. A queer fellow, and very suspicious."

"*Sí*. That is the one. So you helped him to get away?"

"Get away?" I looked puzzled. "Away from what?"

"He is a thief, men say. He stole much money from his master."

Now that was a lie, I knew. Gregorio had not a *bolívar* to his name. And he was not the man to steal. But I only yawned and answered:

"So? Well, he was starving when I met him. So I fed him and put him on his way, as I would do with any other man in like case. I have heard that he reached the Meta safely. That is all I know of him. Are men hunting him?"

"Not now."

He said no more, and lay looking sharply at me. I stood up and prepared to go.

"Well, they may as well give him up," I said. "He is far away. *Buenas tardes*."

And with that I went aboard and pulled out. At the *bongo* I found a couple of new Guahibos, fellows from one of the places that dealt with Padillo, gossiping with my own men. Giving them a word and a nod, I told my crew boss to get under way. The visitors jumped ashore, and I gave no more attention to them. I was to remember them later, though.

After we left the place I thought a little about Padillo and Gregorio, and then I recalled that Gregorio had not told who he was when he stopped at that *sitio*. So Jorge must have learned his name from somebody else. Men of Funes, undoubtedly, hunting for the refugee. But the hunt had been given up, Jorge said, and Gregorio was away up the river, paddling back to headquarters and getting farther away from the Orinoco at every stroke. So everything was all right.

Well, I came on down to Bolívar, sold out and worked back home again. It's a long trip, you know, and it uses up a good many days. They call it about a thousand miles from the Vichada mouth to Bolívar and back, and there are the rapids to get around, and the blundering old tub of a boat barely crawls along. Going down, the wind and the waves are against you, and coming back, the current fights you all the way. If I make the round trip in three months I feel that I've made very good time. What's that, sir? Oh yes, my Guahibos go all the way with me. They know they are safe as long as they stay under my protection. No man molests another man's *peones* in this country unless he wants a fight with their patron.

So, as I was saying, I got back to the Vichada about the middle of June. I had left it late in February. On my way up I met Padillo, down-bound with a good load, but had no talk with him. We passed each other in midstream, and just waved our sombreroes once by way of howdy-do. I could see him grin, though. He grinned and grinned and kept on grinning as long as I could see him. I wondered what he was so merry about. But then I thought he probably had a few shots of rum under his belt, and so I forgot it.

After I entered the Vichada I began to think more about Gregorio and Toma. Along with my regular supply of trade goods I had brought the cartridges and the dress he wanted, and some other things besides. Several suits of tough cloth, a new sombrero and a good poniard for Gregorio and beads and bangles enough to make Toma feel like a princess. I had a good deal of fun imagining how pleased they would be with these unexpected gifts, and now that I was drawing near home I kept moving right along, with no stops for visits. If I had taken time to halt and talk at some settlement, I'd have learned that my haste was foolishness. I was already about three months too late.

I had passed through Padillo's territory and was well into my own before I woke up from my dreaming. We had seen a few Guahibos here and there, but had no talk with them. Now, one noon when we had tied up to eat, along came several fellows in a canoe, going back home after a hunt. They stopped to talk and give me some fresh meat. I never ate the meat. The news they gave me killed my appetite.

"You know about Gory?" asked one of them. That was their way of pronouncing Gregorio.

"What about him?" I asked.

"Dead," says he bluntly.

"What! *Madre de Dios!* No."

"Yes. Dead three moons."

I sat feeling stunned. It was hardly more than three moons since I had left there. After a minute or two I demanded:

"How? Where?"

"Men with guns came and shot him," he told me. "They caught him and his woman on the river. Gory paddled to shore and fought while his woman ran and hid. He shot off all his bullets. Then they killed him. They cut off his head and took it back to the Orinoco."

So that was the end of poor Gregorio. Old man Funes's arm had been longer than I thought. The fact that those killers took away their man's head showed plainly enough that they were Funes's tools working for a reward. Believe me, I was mad. I swore until the Indians grew afraid of me. Then I cooled down enough to get the rest of the story.

It seems that Gregorio had not started home as soon as I told him to. The Guahibos at that last village had been preparing to hold a big celebration in a few days—they do that every now and then, for some reason or other—and the *capitán* invited my subchief and his woman to stay and enjoy it. They stayed. Those *fiestas* always last for some time, and it must have been about ten days later when the pair started back to headquarters. They had been gone only one day when those armed men came in, guided by a couple of down-river Guahibos. These men said they had a message for Gregorio and must see him at once. Finding him gone, they shoved off again and chased him until they got him.

They tried to get Toma, too, but she hid so well in the shore growth that they never found her. No, I don't think they meant to kill her. That is, not immediately. She was too young and pretty.

The two down-river Guahibos hid, too. As soon as the shooting started they jumped overboard and swam under water to shore, where they crawled into the bush. After the canoe went back downstream they came out and found Toma, and the three of them walked to the nearest village. There the two men were hauled over the coals by the *capitán*, who wanted to know what they meant by guiding white men in there to kill my subchief, and they said they never knew there was to be any killing. They had come, they said, with the express understanding that the white men would not harm any one on the Vichada. Also, they had been commanded to come by somebody down the river.

Just who had given them this command I could not find out. My informants seemed not to know. And I never have been able to learn just what became of those two Guahibos. Nobody has ever seen them since so far as I have heard. Maybe that chief who questioned them could tell me a good deal, but he never has. When I asked him, he just grinned in a cold-blooded way. I suspect that they died soon after he got through with them.

Well, when I thought things over I remembered something. And to my crew I said:

"At the *sitio* of Jorge Padillo you talked with two men of the lower river. Did you tell them I had a new *compañero* called Gory?"

"Yes," they answered honestly. "It was news."

Then I cursed myself for a fool. Of course they would tell such news as that. They knew no reason to keep it secret. And after our departure the two Indians visiting Padillo would naturally tell it to him. The rest of it was simple enough. Padillo had only to bargain with the first Funes man to appear, coax those Guahibos, or others, perhaps, into guiding them and send them on their way.

If I could have gotten my hands on Padillo then I would have broken his neck, and no questions asked. If there had been any chance of getting him by waiting a week or two at his *sitio*, I would have waited. But he would not be within my reach for at least a month and perhaps longer. The rainy season was starting, the rivers were up and growing worse every day, and I had to get on. So I went, mad as a hornet.

It was more than half a year before I saw Padillo again, and meanwhile I had cooled off enough to look at the thing judicially. And I saw that I had no real justification for taking revenge on him. There was no actual proof that he had anything to do with the affair. Neither was there any real evidence that Funes men were concerned in it. And even if there had been, Gregorio was a Venezuelan, killed by Venezuelans in a private feud. Neither I nor any other Colombian had been molested. So, from the standpoint of impersonal, unprejudiced justice, I had no grounds to proceed on.

Neither did I have any valid reason to make it a personal matter, because I had never told Padillo that Gregorio was my assistant. Instead of protecting Gregorio by disclaiming any connection with him, I had practically tied my own hands against exacting any penalty for what happened to him. It took a little time for me to see this, but finally I had to admit it. So when I did meet Padillo, retribution slipped again and left him unharmed, as usual.

Not that I let it pass without a word. Oh, no. I cursed him out and promised him that if he ever again nosed into any matter concerning me, even the sale of one hammock, I would tear him apart and feed the pieces to the crocodiles. But he swore that he had no knowledge of the thing, and all that. And so it rested. But said I:

"Your turn is coming, Padillo. The devil takes care of his own, but only until he tires of it. And one of these days you will howl to the devil for help and to God and men for mercy, and find none."

I said that only because I hoped it would be so, not because I foresaw any such thing. But it scared him for the time, anyway. He turned a sickly yellow and licked his lips nervously. After calling him a few more names I left him.

Well, that was about all of that. Gregorio was gone and Jorge lived on as before; so did I. So the one who really got the worst of it was Toma. But still, she didn't fare so badly in the end. I found her and gave her the beads and bangles I had brought, and they cheered her up a good deal. And I carried her back home, and on the way I looked at her quite a bit and thought things over and—well, I decided that I could do with one more wife. So it wasn't very long before she had a new man. She seems perfectly contented.

IV

FROM that time on we two traders had nothing to do with each other. Whenever I came to the Orinoco I passed Padillo's *sitio* without a halt or a hail, and if by any chance I met him elsewhere, I simply looked straight through him without seeing him. As before, he kept off my grounds, and he never again encouraged Funes men to come up the river. So there was no occasion for me to have any talk or trouble with him. I carried on my affairs as if he did not exist.

But that doesn't mean that I knew nothing about what he did. I kept hearing things. You would be astonished, sir, if you knew how talkative these dumb-looking Indians really are, and how far every bit of news travels in this empty-appearing country. Any Guahibo who sees or hears anything interesting tells it to his friends, and they pass it on to others, and so it goes far back into the interior. And Padillo usually had an Indian or two at his place, and whatever they learned went up the Vichada on the tongues of any others who called there. So things kept coming to me *poco á poco* until I knew quite well what he was doing. Often these fragments of news meant little or nothing in themselves, but sometimes a number of pieces, fitted together as they slowly trickled in, made an interesting whole. Sometimes, too, I picked up other things on my cruises down this Orinoco, a little here and a bit there, that dovetailed into what the Indians knew.

That was how I got the complete story of what happened to Marie Velásquez of Ciudad Bolívar.

Marie was a young French woman. She met Pablo Velásquez over in the English island of Trinidad while he was there on a business trip, and married him. Pablo was old enough to be her father, but he had a good bit of money and a prosperous shop in Bolívar, and naturally that made him more acceptable. She had an eye for business, had Marie. And she was a good wife for a shopkeeper. She took hold of the store almost as soon as she landed, and within two weeks she knew more about it than Pablo himself. The old man had grown rather slack in his ways, and his affairs were more or less tangled. But Marie straightened him and his business out *pronto*.

Now Pablo was one of the dealers who handled hammocks on commission, and for some time he had been taking most of those brought in by Jorge Padillo. So Padillo now met Marie. And, although he was ordinary enough up here in the bush, whenever he was in town, the fellow always made it a point to look and act like a million pesos. To see him stroll along the Paseo, barbered and slicked and dressed to the last notch, you would think he was the governor, if not the president himself. And his talk was as big as his airs. He spoke of his "estate" and his "*Indios*" and so on, as if he owned about half the country, and did it so smoothly that anybody who didn't know this up-river region—and very few Bolívar people do—would be likely to swallow it. And Marie, although she was no babe in arms and had known a man or two here and there, swallowed most of his bluff. In fact, Jorge made quite a hit with her. As I said before, her husband was old.

Well, in about two years Pablo Velásquez died. Marie inherited everything. For awhile she kept up the shop as before. But she had made very few friends in Bolívar, and after a time she began to think of selling out the place and leaving the country. Then in came Jorge Padillo with his yearly cargo. As soon as he saw the situation he got to work.

He would have married her, probably, if he could, and so have got hold of the business. But there was an obstacle to that. He already had a wife, a legal wife, I mean, somewhere up in Guárico. He had deserted her and their children years before, but she still was living and married to him hard and fast by the church. And the *padres* in Bolívar knew it. Thus there was no possibility of his marrying again unless, of course, he could arrange the death of his wife, and that would be a rather delicate affair, requiring time. Naturally he couldn't tell this to Marie. Neither could he buy the business from her as she asked him to do. Her price was too steep for him.

But there's more than one way to skin a cat, and talk is cheap. So Jorge made love to the lady, which didn't displease her at all, and also he invented a proposition that appealed to her business sense. It was something like this:

"On the upper Orinoco everything costs three or four times as much as here. A machete which sells here for one peso costs four at San Fernando; a straw sombrero worth one or two *bolívares* here is worth five up there, and so on. That is because all such things must be brought such long distances and because the traders exact large profits. On the other hand, the balata rubber, which forms the wealth of Amazonas, is worth only half as much at San Fernando as at Ciudad Bolívar. Now here you have a shop full of articles which you wish to sell off and which the up-river people would give much to have. So why not take these goods to the place where you can make three or four times as much profit as here? And then why not buy up balata at half price and bring it back here to sell? So you will be rid of all your goods and have far more money than you can possibly get otherwise."

That was sound sense and truth, as she could learn for herself by making inquiry. And there was some truth, but not so much, in the rest of his plan.

"As for the transportation, that will cost you nothing," says he. "I shall furnish the ships and the crews. And, since I am on very good terms with Coronel Funes, who rules that territory, I shall see that you travel without harm. You will be my guest at my main *hacienda*, with servants to attend you, and a good place for your trading will be established. So you will be as safe and comfortable as here. Yes, more so! And it would be well for you to bring as much money as you can so that you can buy all the balata your ships will hold. Yes, bring all you have and invest it so. I shall find a way to fetch to Bolívar all the rubber you buy, even though boats are few. I have great power in that country—"

And so on and so on. Promises came easily to Padillo.

But Marie was doubtful. Like everybody else down the river, she had heard tales of the doings of the Funes gang, and they were hardly the sort that would encourage any woman to enter the Territorio de Amazonas. And she had heard enough about the river itself to realize that the trip would be a tough one. Still, Jorge had made quite a hit with her, as I've said. So in the end she surrendered completely.

Then Padillo bargained for boats—there are usually sailing piraguas lying at Bolívar, as you know—and he put her and her goods and money aboard and saw her on her way. To the captains he gave a yarn to the effect that he had made a deal for her stock and that it would go hard with them if they should fail to deliver everything, including Marie. He himself hired a gas launch that happened to be there and in that he rushed ahead to make arrangements. The most important one he made was by sending word to Coronel Funes, saying:

"I am bringing into the Territory a fine lot of goods which I will sell to you at half the usual price if you will command your garrisons to allow them to reach my *sitio* unharmed. I want also a safeguard for my sweetheart who travels with the goods."

Now Funes used to be a trader himself in the old days before he grabbed the power in Amazonas, and he still had all the instincts of his trading days. Naturally, any such proposition as this hit him hard. So back came his orders to the garrisons at Maipures and Atures. And when Marie and her goods arrived at the Amazonas border, she found herself being treated with marked respect, her stock passing overland around the rapids without delay and Jorge Padillo giving commands and strutting about as if the *soldados* belonged to him, not to Funes. At Maipures it was the same. To Marie, of course, this seemed proof that he was the powerful man he claimed to be. So, between this and his love-making, she was ready to believe anything he told her.

Even when she reached his bare little hovel of a house she didn't wake up. They say love is blind, and she was more than a little in love with him now. And he had another lie ready. Says he:

"This is merely one of my camps where I stay now and then when I have business at the main river. I have brought you here because it occurred to me that this would make the best spot for your trading station. All men traveling along the Orinoco must pass here, so it will be most convenient for all. Let us stay here a few days and arrange the stock. Then we shall go to my *hacienda,* which is inland a way, and you will see how magnificent it is."

So they stayed there awhile. Guahibos dropped in, as usual, and he told her they were his *Indios*, as if he had said his dogs or his cattle, and bullied them about in his usual way. The Guahibos were used to this loud manner of his, and they didn't mind it. They just grinned and did any small thing he told them to do. Marie thought this was quite wonderful, as she had never before seen real bow-and-arrow Indians. But soon she began to wonder where his servants were, and why he didn't start for that magnificent home of his.

He explained the absence of servants by saying he had returned sooner than expected, so that they all thought he was still down the river. As for starting home, it would not be safe to leave the goods here unguarded. He was expecting *soldados* to come at any time to protect them in his absence.

As it happened, some Funes men did come up the river soon after that, bound for San Fernando and, as usual, they made a stop at his *sitio.* He met these fellows at the shore and made a little deal with them. They were to stay there a few days and guard everything while he went down the river to confer with the commandant at Maipures, then they should carry a message for him to Coronel Funes. He knew this was a perfectly safe thing to do, because those men all knew their master's orders against molesting any of that stock, and not the toughest of them would dare to steal anything under those conditions. So then he told Marie that the *soldados* had come in obedience to his commands, and that now she could accompany him home.

Now just below the Rio Vichada, on the other side of the Orinoco, is the Rio Sipapo. It comes tumbling down out of high mountains where nobody lives but Indians—the Piaroas. Those Piaroas are a rather wild lot, and white men keep out of their country. The upper part of the river is too rough to be traveled by anybody but Indians, anyway, and about the only thing to be found up there is a good chance of sudden death. At certain times, though, the Indians come down from the hills to fish and dig turtle eggs on the lower Sipapo. And that lower part of their river is fairly navigable for some distance inland.

Padillo took a curial and a couple of Guahibo paddlers and, of course, Marie, and started downstream. But he didn't go straight to Maipures. He turned in at the mouth of the Sipapo and traveled inland. This, he told Marie, was the road to his home. About one day's journey away from the Orinoco he found a good-sized fishing camp of Piaroas and, through one of his Guahibos who knew something of the Piaroas, he managed a palaver with their *capitán.* Meanwhile Marie, sure she was perfectly safe, walked about and looked over the camp.

"This woman of mine," he quietly told the chief, "is very headstrong and disobedient, and I am tired of her. And I have found that she means to run off with another man, and the pair of them intend first to poison me. I ought to kill her, but I do not like to do that. So if you will take her away to a place where she can never come out again, you can have her. Remember that if she ever escapes and reaches the big river, men with guns will come to shoot you. And you must take her away at once before her other man comes to see what has become of her. If you do this and keep her safe afterward, no harm will come to you. And I will give you some very fine knives as a present."

The chief took a long look at Marie. And said he—

"Give me the knives."

Padillo gave him half a dozen good belt knives. The *capitán* spoke to a couple of his men, and they walked over to Marie and seized her. At the same time Padillo gave a quick order to his Guahibos, and they ran with him to the curial and backed out into the stream, Padillo holding his rifle ready to discourage any one from putting an arrow through him and shutting his mouth forever.

"Jorge!" screamed Marie, struggling with the Piaroas. "What is this? Oh, shoot, shoot and save me! Jorge! Jorge!"

"Have no fear, *querida mia*," he called back with a grin. "Those are my servants, and they will take you home. *Adios*, and a pleasant journey!"

And with that he went away, leaving her screaming like a lost soul. And a lost soul she was, too. No white man ever saw her again.

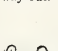
Padillo made camp at a safe distance downstream, giving the Piaroas time to get away. The next day he went to Maipures, and there he raved and cursed the Piaroas, saying that while he and Marie were eating lunch at the mouth of the Sipapo the Indians had caught him by surprize, dragged away his sweetheart and tried to kill him. He demanded that *soldados* be sent to shoot those —— and rescue her. Things were dull at the post, and the commandant gladly sent the men. But of course they found nothing but a deserted fishing camp. When they reached the rough water up above, they quit. And that was the end of that.

So Padillo returned to his *sitio* and sent the *soldados* there to Funes with the word that his stock was ready for sale. Funes sent back boats, men and an officer with money and bought the whole lot at half the usual up-river price. It was a fine deal for him, and a better one for Padillo, since he had paid out nothing but the costs of transportation. Also, the worthy Jorge had all the money Marie had brought for buying rubber. It was one of the biggest hauls he ever made.

Now of course Funes, with his power, could have calmly grabbed all that stuff instead of paying for it, but he didn't. Still better, he could have trumped up some charge against Padillo and executed him, like many another man with money. But he didn't. Or the Piaroas could have killed him in spite of his rifle. But they didn't. Nothing at all hurt Padillo. Justice? Humph!

As for Marie—well, those Piaroas are makers of the *curare* poison used on blow-gun darts. It kills very quickly, but without much pain. Anything wounded by it seems to grow stupid and go to sleep, and that's the end. And it takes only a little jab, hardly more than a pin-prick, to do the work. Well, some time after Jorge Padillo completed this clever deal of his, one of the Vichada Guahibos learned from a Piaroa that Marie had tried several times to escape; but with no luck. So she got a dart and stabbed it into her breast. It was her only way out.

V



IT WAS a long time, you comprehend, before the whole story of Marie Velásquez reached me. In fact, I had the end of it before the beginning, because the last of it was what my Indian friends knew, while the start and the middle were gathered later from down-river people and Funes men. By the time I had all the pieces fitted together, so many other things had happened along the Orinoco that Marie was practically forgotten. So nothing could be done about it.

Why? Because the only witnesses to the abandonment of Marie were Indians. And Indians, as I've told you, have no standing. Tell men that you know a thing is so because Indians told you so, and you might as well say that you learned it from a parrot or a monkey. Besides, Marie had no relatives and almost no friends, and nobody cared. And as far as I personally was concerned, it was none of my business.

It was somewhat the same way, too, in the matter of Miguel Moreno and his girl. True, Miguel was a countryman of mine, and a townsman as well; he came from my own city, Bogotá. Still, the finish of that affair really was nothing to me.

I knew Miguel, but I'd hardly say we were friends. He was younger than I; when I left Bogotá he was hardly more than a boy; but he was hot-tempered and haughty, and once or twice I'd had to put him in his place. Later on, when he suddenly appeared down in the plains country, he had grown into a man, but his pride and his temper had not improved. So we didn't fall on each other's necks.

Now you must understand, sir, that the largest river flowing eastward from near Bogotá is the Meta, which enters this Orinoco not far above this camp of ours. Chaps who find it advisable to leave Bogotá in haste and go to another country are apt to take the Meta route. For a man who wants to dodge pursuers and reach Venezuela safely, though, that river has some disadvantages. One is that it is used by traders, who could easily report the passage of a refugee to anybody following him. Another is that the Indians of the lower part are savages, always watching for a chance to kill and rob a traveler. Even the traders, journeying in armed parties, have to be on their guard. A lone man has less than half a chance of getting through alive. And a man with a woman—he is plain *loco* if he tries it.

But on the upper river there is one spot where, by going overland about a mile, you can leave the Meta behind and go by canoe to the Vichada. This is at the village of Arimena. After walking south from there, you come to a *caño* which leads into the Rio Muco; and the Muco empties into the Vichada, and the Vichada, of course, into the Orinoco. The Vichada mouth is about two hundred and fifty miles higher up the Orinoco than the Meta mouth, and also above the rapids; so a fellow making this detour goes far out of the direct line and thus makes much more work for himself. But the Indians are not so bad, and any pursuer is likely to give up the chase as a bad job.

WELL, I travel on the Muco now and then in the course of my business. And one day, while I was taking *siesta* at the camp of a little Indian tribe, some young fellows who had been out spearing fish came running in to tell me that another white man was coming downstream. I got up, took my rifle and strolled down to the shore.

The bush was rather thick there, and I could not see up the river; but I heard the thumping of paddle-shafts on the gunwale of a curial. The beat was slow, as if the men were tired. Then along came the canoe, with two *mestizos* paddling, one steering, a white man sitting with a gun in his hands, and a little palm *carroza*—cabin, you know—amidships. The master saw the dugouts floating at the little port, and snapped at his men to turn in there. Then he saw me, and his hammer clicked.

"*Buenas tardes*," said I, without moving. "Where do you go?"

He looked me over sharply, giving me no answer. His men kept on coming. They rammed their canoe in among the Indian dugouts in a sullen way, as if careless of what they did. The sudden jar brought an angry curse from the white man and a little cry from the cabin—the voice of a woman. Much surprized by the last, I stared, trying to see past him; but he stood up, blocking the entrance and my view at the same time.

"Who lives here, fellow?" he asked, as if speaking to a peon.

I knew I was roughly dressed and not recently shaved, but I did not relish his address. I gave him no reply; simply stood looking at him. Straight as an arrow, he was, and handsome, except for his scowling expression.

"*Peste!* Do you not hear me?" he demanded.

"If you are speaking to me, you will say 'señor'," I told him.

His lip curled. But then he stared at me from head to foot and back, and suddenly he laughed.

"*Caramba!* Sixto Scott! *No es verdad?*" he asked.

"Quite true," I nodded. "And who the —— are you?"

"Miguel Moreno." He shoved his hat up from over his eyes, and then I recognized him.

"Ho! *Ajo!*" said I. "Miguel Moreno, here among the *Indios!* Hm! Has that temper of yours put you into trouble back yonder?"

His eyes narrowed again, and he shot a look at the river behind him. Then he scowled at his men—sweaty, tired fellows drooping on their paddles—as he heard one of them grunt at my question. Plainly they had had enough of that temper.

"Mind your own business!" he snapped at me.

Then:

"I want new men. Tell some one to come here."

"Tell some one yourself," I returned. "Where are you going?"

"To ——, perhaps!" he retorted crossly.

"Quite likely," says I. "A quick voyage to you!"

At that the men chuckled. He turned red and gave me a hot look; bit his lip, and looked beyond me. Some Indians now stood at a little distance back, watching and listening. After looking at them a minute he called:

"*Indios*, come here!"

None of them moved. He grew redder, and his rifle came up. Then said I:

"If you want men here you had better treat them like men. These people have no master. You cannot kick them about like the Indians of the mountains. Show sense or go on."

He still scowled, but looked a little uncertain. Then he asked—

"Can they be depended on?"

"Yes, if treated right."

"*Bien*. I have had enough of these surly dogs. We shall land here and eat, and then you animals—" this to his crew "—can go. Come, Lolita."

He moved forward, and out from the low cabin behind him rose a girl, veiled and gloved against the mosquitoes. Through the veil I could see big dark eyes and a pile of black hair, but not much more. She stepped along the boat to him, and he handed her ashore in as stately a manner as if she were a queen.

I turned and walked back, telling the Indians to make a meal for the visitors. They scattered. Miguel and the girl followed me into the hut where my hammock hung. There she put up her veil, and after one look at her I took off my sombrero. She was very pretty; young, pure white, well born and well bred.

"*Válgame!*" I exclaimed. "This is a rude place and a ruder country for such as you, señorita!"

And I gave Miguel a hard look. It seemed altogether wrong for him to bring a girl like her into that wilderness. But she answered me in a calm, steady tone that showed it was her doing as well as his.

"I am here because I wish to be here, señor," she told me.

So I bowed and said no more on that point. It was quite clear that they loved each other and were determined to belong to each other, and that whatever trouble lay behind them was due to this. Perhaps there had been a duel.

This being so, I decided to help them where I could. So after we ate I talked to the Indian *capitán* and fixed up the matter of another canoe and some good boatmen. Miguel paid his *mestizos* in a contemptuous way, and they pushed away northward, glad to be rid of him.

"Now," said I, "these Indians will carry you to the Vichada in three days. Beyond that point they will not go, and you must arrange for another crew at a village of Guahibos where they will leave you. One thing I must impress strongly on you. You must not nag at these men. You must let them work as they will, land where they choose, stop when they say. Otherwise they will desert you. Keep your mouth shut, pay them what they ask—some bright handkerchiefs, a few pounds of salt, or whatever it may be—and they will speak well of you to your next crew."

"*Bien*," he agreed, disdainfully. "Let them hurry. I want to push on."

"Now? No chance of that," I said. "The day is far gone. They will start early in the morning—"

"Who is the commander of my boat?" he broke in. "I! And I say we shall start now!"

"Very well. Go and tell your canoe to start, and watch it jump to obey you," says I. "Perhaps it will paddle itself. No Indian will paddle it until morning."

Then up spoke the girl Lolita, in that calm way of hers.

"Miguel, have patience. The señor knows of what he speaks."

He turned very red again, but held his tongue. We settled down to spend the night there. When he grew good-humored we talked further, and I told him of the rapids, of the Funes garrisons, and of other difficulties, and how to meet them. Among other matters I mentioned Jorge Padillo.

"The man Padillo may assist you, for a price," I said. "But put no trust in him. If you are carrying much money do not let it be known. Show only what is necessary, and conceal the rest. And do not stay at the Padillo *sitio* an hour longer than you must. From the time you reach it until you are safely out of Amazonas, make all the speed you can."

"That is what I mean to do," he nodded. "I have no fear of any Venezuelans, but I am in haste to reach Spain."

"Spain!" I stared at him. "You are going to Spain? Where do you think Spain is? On the Orinoco?"

"My education is as good as yours, or better!" he snapped. "I know quite well where Spain is, and how to reach it. We are going to Spain, and there we shall live peacefully in Madrid."

I looked at Lolita, who smiled happily. And I said, "Oh, I see," and nothing more. But it was quite evident that, with this plan in mind, he must be carrying a large sum of money.

AFTER awhile he became restless and began walking up and down, up and down, like a caged *tigre*, while the girl, lying in a hammock, watched him seriously. At length he muttered something about inspecting the new canoe and stepped out, giving me a look that said plainly, "Come with me." I strolled down the path with him. As soon as we were out of hearing he asked—

"Have you anything to drink?"

"Why, yes," said I. "A little rum. I always carry it with me as a bracer."

"Then, *por amor de Dios*, let me have it! I have not slept much of late. And the sun and the cursed biting flies—you understand."

I nodded, remembering the time when I first came down from the high, cool city of the Andes to the hell-hot plains and the torturing bugs of the *caños*. A mountain man feels the change severely at first. And Miguel had been under a strain of unending anxiety. So I told him to wait at the river while I found the medicine. In order to get it I had to carry a little tin trunk out from the hut where Lolita lay. Down at the shore I unlocked it and handed him the bottle. He snatched it like a starving man given food.

It was good rum—the real Maracaibo,—and as it flowed over his tongue his eyes glowed. Before I could seize it from him nearly a fourth of the liquor was gone; and I almost had to knock him down to get it then.

"*Puerco!*" I scolded. "You guzzle like a hog! Half of that drink should be more than enough."

"I will pay for it," he growled. "Your own price. Hand it here!"

"Not much," I refused. "This stuff is priceless here. I have to bring it hundreds of miles." And, after giving him a sharp look, I added, "You will do well to drink no more this side of Spain, *hombre*. I can see that you are too fond of it. If you are a man you will refrain from it for the sake of Lolita."

"I can take care of Lolita, and myself, too! Give me that!"

"Try to get it," said I. And I put it back into the trunk and turned the key. If I had not been so big he would have jumped at me. As it was, he swallowed and walked off, with never a word of thanks.

Back in the hut, Lolita looked steadily at both of us, saying nothing. Before long he showed the effects of his drink, first humming and smiling at nothing, then growing drowsy, and finally going to sleep. Still she said not a word, but her eyes spoke for her. She felt hurt at him and disgusted at me. I kept my mouth shut, of course; but I felt like throwing him into the river.

Well, we all slept peacefully through the night, and in the morning they went. Miguel seemed in better temper that morning, giving me thanks for my help, and so on; but even then he spoke in a tolerant way that made me wish to slap him. They shoved off early, the Indians stroking fast, and slid away out of sight in no time. And said I to myself, thinking of Lolita:

"It may be well for you, Miguel, that you have some brains in your boat, even though they are not in your own head. You may have need of them if you are to reach Spain."

Then I got into my own curial and went on upstream about my business. On my way down again I met the Indian paddlers returning. They had taken the white man and his woman to the Vichada village agreed on, they said, and the white man had gotten another good crew. So, as far as the Rio Muco was concerned, that was the end of them.

VI

THE settlement where the Muco men left the two travelers was one of those where I was well known. I had told Miguel, and his paddlers as well, to tell the *capitán* at that place that I wanted him to provide a new crew *pronto*. And Miguel, for all his top-lofty airs, heeded my advice about the treatment of his men. In consequence, he had no trouble in reaching the Vichada or in continuing his journey to the Orinoco.

The Guahibos who landed him and Lolita at Padillo's place came straight back. So it was not long until I heard that the pair had safely reached Venezuelan water. It was some time, though, before I learned of what came about after that. My hammock harvesting was months off, and when I tell you that my place is fifteen days' journey from the Orinoco, you can understand that I don't make the trip without some reason. I certainly wouldn't do it for the pleasure of calling on Padillo, and there was nothing else to take me there.

It was well on in the afternoon when my young acquaintances reached the *sitio* of Jorge; so they naturally stayed there for the night. If the paddlers had been from Padillo's trading territory they would have stayed also; but they came from my grounds, and had little use for him, so they put back without much delay. They stopped for a short rest, though, and exchanged news with some of Padillo's men who were there. They themselves had learned all they could from the Muco men, of course, about the strangers. So as soon as Padillo could quiz his own people he undoubtedly got everything the various Indians had observed since Miguel met me; and Indians don't miss much. However that may be, it took him only a short time to produce some rum.

"After the infernal heat of the open river and the plague of the flies," he said, "a taste of the Maracaibo will be of great medicinal value, *caballero mio*. Let us make it a toast to your señora—the fairest lady, my faith, who ever honored this poor *casa* by her presence!"

It must have been very hard for Miguel to refuse that drink, offered in that manner, but he did. I had warned him, you remember, against trusting Padillo in any way; and probably Lolita had made him realize how she felt about his drinking. He declined very shortly, and began to talk about transportation down the river. Padillo was surprized and angered. It is not usual to refuse a drink, and the natural inference is a suspicion that it may be poisoned. Besides, he had particular reasons for wishing Miguel to take plenty of rum. But he let the matter pass for the time. He drank his own, though, with a bow to Lolita, thereby both proving that the liquor was good and conveying a compliment to the lady. Then he said the matter of the transportation might be difficult to arrange.

"Why?" demanded Miguel, in his impatient way. "I can pay well."

"Oh, without doubt, without doubt," Jorge smirked. "But men and boats are busy, and conditions are always uncertain hereabouts because of the army. It will take time and thought. And—you will pardon me, señor—men will ask where and how they are to be paid."

Miguel was ready for that.

"I have a little money with me—enough to prove that I act in good faith," he said. "And at Ciudad Bolívar I shall obtain much more. I wish to be taken straight through to that city."

"It would be much more easily arranged if you could show them the money before starting," Padillo objected. "Of course I do not doubt you; but the men are cautious, señor, and since you are not known to them—"

"The swine will take my word!" cried Miguel, his temper slipping. "Do you Venezuelans not know a *caballero* when you see one? Bring the men to me and I will convince them!"

"*Sí, sí*, certainly," said Padillo. "I shall do what I can."

"You will be the richer by a gold *condor* if you arrange it speedily," Miguel had sense enough to promise.

Jorge protested that he was only too glad to be of service; gold was not necessary as far as he was concerned; and so on. Then he said they would discuss the question more at leisure after supper, and excused himself.

WHEN that supper was ready, the meat put before Miguel had been well flavored with rum. I know this because Padillo was seen—though not by his guests—to put the liquor on it. Miguel, after a glance at Lolita, ate it without a word. His coffee also had a dash of rum in it. The taste, of course, aroused in him a craving for more.

Lolita soon retired to the room set aside for her. When she was gone Padillo quietly produced the rum again and poured two drinks; tasted his own, smacked his lips, and grinned at Miguel. Miguel drank.

"Ah, that is better," Jorge approved. "Good rum never hurt any man; and I am glad to see that you know this liquor is good. How could I have confidence in you, *caballero*, if you showed no confidence in me? Distrust on the one side must breed distrust on the other, *no es verdad?* But now we are friends."

With that he began to talk about conditions along the river, telling Miguel many things which were known to all people of the region but were new to the Colombian, and therefore of interest. He did not pry into the affairs of his visitor. Probably he already knew as much as he considered necessary. He played the part of a benevolent host willing to give his guest all information he had. He mentioned me, too, in an off-hand way, saying I was a business rival of his—yes, one might say I was an enemy; I wanted the whole Vichada for myself, and so was hostile to him. Quite likely he suspected that I had planted distrust of him in Miguel's mind. Anyway, his talk and manner were such as might make the listener think I was prejudiced and Padillo a very decent fellow. And as he talked he poured a drink now and then, taking less and less himself and giving Miguel more and more. Miguel put it away as fast as it came. After awhile he helped himself.

When he was becoming unsteady, his entertainer brought up again the question of payment for the down-river journey. Without saying so, he hinted by manner and tone that he was not altogether satisfied as to Miguel's ability to pay. The proud Moreno temper flashed out.

"*Sangre de Cristo!*" Miguel swore, jumping to his feet. "Since when has the word of a Moreno been doubted? I can buy your whole miserable river and all the men and boats on it! Look, you cheap dog of a trader, and satisfy yourself!"

With that he staggered over to a strong box, very heavy for its size, which lay behind the hammock where he was to sleep, and unlocked it. Padillo was right at his heels, holding the candle. And there in the box was stacked roll on roll of gold *condores* and double *condores*—the same as American eagles and double eagles.

"*Ajo!*" said Padillo.

And he stood staring. Maybe it was his tone, or his look, or both of them that put Miguel on his guard again. Anyway, he dropped the lid—it had a snap lock—and picked up his rifle. And for a minute or two he and Jorge stood looking at each other without a word.

"*Cra!* Are you once more distrustful of me, señor?" Padillo asked then. Remember that I did not ask to see this. You showed it of your own will. And I will have you know that though I may be a dog of a trader, as you say, I have in bank at Bolívar more wealth than you can show. Have no fear for your little box."

He went back to the table as if offended. Miguel watched him a little longer, then put the gun aside.

"At any rate you have no doubt as to my ability?" he asked, still watching.

"Ho ho! None whatever, *amigo*, none whatever. You are a man of more than one kind of metal."

Padillo stood a minute with one hand on the neck of the bottle, moving it about as if intending to pour another drink, and looking at his guest. Then he changed his mind and let the bottle rest.

"We shall arrange matters in the morning," he said shortly. "*Buen' noche', señor.*"

Without another look he walked into a small room adjoining and shut the door. Miguel stood scowling a little while. Then he made ready for the night. He hooked the outer door; saw to it that the window bars were firm; listened a minute at the door of Lolita, and longer at that of Jorge; then laid a clothing-bag where any one coming through that last door would stumble over it. He put his rifle beside his hammock; sat down, and looked all around. After that he got up again and walked once more around the room. Finally he stepped to the table, picked up the bottle and poured a stiff nightcap; gulped it down, and blew out the candle.

That was the last that was seen or heard of him by a Spanish-speaking Guahibo who had been standing outside one of the barred windows and curiously watching everything. And it was the last time he was seen alive by any one.

* * *

NOW of course I can't say exactly what went on in Padillo's mind, but I can make a close guess. Here was a man with much money and a beautiful girl; more gold than Padillo could let escape him, and a woman far more charming than Marie Velásquez had ever been. He wanted both. He couldn't get them without removing the man; and he must act quickly. Thus far, nobody but a few Indians knew they were there. Tomorrow might come Funes's men. He could not let Funes men, or any other men, in on this deal. With Miguel gone, the gold and the girl could be taken care of easily and safely.

So, when he toyed with that bottle before leaving Miguel, he dropped something down the open neck and swashed it around inside. And Miguel, helping himself to that final drink, killed himself.

Some time between then and sunrise Miguel disappeared from that room. So did his box of gold. So did his rifle and his clothes and practically all his equipment. So did a paddle which had stood near the door. And a small curial which had been tied at the bank also vanished. That canoe —or what was left of it—and the paddle and two or three other floating things were later picked up far down the river. They had gone through both the long rapids, and the rocks had battered them into nothing much. If Miguel had been found he would have been in the same condition. But nobody ever saw him. There are hungry crocodiles below the rapids.

Lolita woke up at daybreak to hear men talking at the river-bank, and then Padillo yelling:

"They have stolen the canoe? *Cra*, that is a fine return for hospitality, to steal a man's best boat! Curses on all Colombianos! Never will I trust one of them again!"

He came shuffling into the house and shoved her door open, the Indians standing behind him. Then he stared at her, made a queer noise as if vastly surprized and suddenly began to chuckle.

"Oh, I see!" he said. "Yes, of course, now I remember. But I really did not believe he would do it. Well, have no fear, *chiquita*. I shall be more constant than he."

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

"Why, as you see, *querida*, your man has deserted you." He gestured toward the space where Miguel and his belongings had been. "In the night, while all slept. A most shabby trick, my faith! But I recall now that he said, while we were drinking together, that he was tired of you and he would leave you; you wished to control him, and a man of spirit could not allow himself to be under the thumb of a woman; and such things. But, *cra*, I did not believe he meant it!"

Lolita was stunned. She sank back in her hammock and stared at the empty spot in the other room. Then she sprang up and ran out of the house; looked all about, and went to the water's edge.

"It is not true!" she kept saying. "It is not true!"

"But it is true," he answered. "He is gone. So now return and compose yourself, little one. Forget him; he is not worth another thought from you. And you will find me more faithful, I promise you. Come, let us go in."

He took her hand and led her back. She walked as if dazed. At the door he turned on the Indians and growled—

"Get out!"

He kicked the door shut. But he forgot the windows.

Lolita went to her room, and he with her. But at her door she came to her senses. She turned suddenly and looked at his yellow, smirking face and glittering eyes, and like the snap of a whip she commanded—

"Keep away from me!"

Then she passed through, shut the door swiftly, and fastened it. He growled; he pleaded; he promised; he threatened. He got no answer at all. Finally he came out and went to her window, where he talked more, but with no more luck. At last she threw something which hit him in the face. He swore furiously, but went away and let her alone.

In all that day she never left her room or unfastened the door. Padillo tried to coax her to come out and eat, but she would not even answer him. So he gave her no food. At times the Indians saw her standing at her window, looking toward the river, her face white as death.

Late in the day several more Guahibos came in from up the Vichada. They tied their canoes—two of them—to waterside trees, left their paddles inside, and went to talk to Padillo about whatever brought them there. Then they made a camp behind the house for the night.

At dark Padillo made one more effort to coax the girl out to the table, but failed again.

"*Bien*," he jeered. "A night of fasting will bring you to your senses, without doubt. In the morning you will come to my table and thank me for my food. Pleasant dreams to you!"

If he had been dealing with an Orinoco woman it might have come out as he said. But Lolita of the Andes was made of different stuff.

He slept in the big room that night, with his hammock between her door and the entrance, and the outer door well hooked. Neither he nor any of the Indians heard any sound but the usual night noises. But in the morning both those doors were open. Lolita was gone. So was another canoe and paddle.

That canoe, too, was found later below the rapids, scarred and splintered by the rocks. Lolita never was found. In the night, knowing nothing of the river, she had just followed the same route taken by Miguel—all the way.

And that was how Miguel and Lolita went to Spain. And except for what the Indians knew—which, of course, didn't count—Jorge Padillo had a perfect alibi.

VII

THAT box of gold never did Padillo much good, except for the pleasure of possession. He never banked it at Bolívar, where he kept the rest of his money. Just why, I can't say. But probably he was afraid to chance it.

For one thing, if he took it down the river the Funes garrisons would be more than likely to spot it during the hauls around the rapids; they usually inspected things quite thoroughly; and they would grab it *pronto*. Then again, it was all Colombian money, and if it reached the bank the officials there would do some tall wondering as to where he got it; and if the news should drift down from Colombia that Miguel Moreno had come this way with a box of Colombian gold, things might grow very thick for Jorge. Besides that, he couldn't be absolutely sure that Lolita was dead. Even though her canoe had gone through the *raudales*, it was just possible that she hadn't gone with it; that somewhere, somehow, she might be living, and so might arise to accuse him later on. There was only a bare chance of this, but still the chance existed. All in all, it would do him no harm to keep his gold hidden from all the world, at least for a time. So he buried it deep in the earth floor of his house.

I think this was the first time he had actually murdered anybody. Plenty of men had been killed through him, but not by his own hand. And as far as I know, he never killed another white man. The thing scared him, probably, when he thought it over. He was a coward at heart, and somewhat superstitious besides. The nights were long and lonely at his *sitio*, and he had plenty of time to sit there and hear the ghosts of Miguel and Lolita whispering in the night breeze, or feel them looking in at him. And it may have been they, or it may have been I, or all three of us, that pushed him into his next piece of dirty work. Anyway, he took up a new line.

He was afraid to meet me, I know. When I had the whole Miguel-Lolita story put together I said a few things about him and what I would do to him; and my remarks reached him before I did. True enough, the matter was really none of my business. But I was mad enough to make it my business, and on my next hammock voyage I called at his *sitio* with blood in my eye. He was gone. He had hurried up his collecting and sailed for Bolívar ahead of me. At Bolívar he finished his selling and got away before I arrived. Somehow he slipped past me on his way back—it's a wide river, you know—and when I came once more to the Vichada mouth he was gone again. I looked for him all the way up the Vichada to my own country, and asked about him from all Guahibos I met, but got no trace. So I let him go until later. It proved to be so much later that I never got hold of him.

Up to this time he had lived at his *sitio* quite steadily, keeping in touch with the doings of the Guahibos on the one hand and those of the Funes crowd on the other. But now, I heard, he was gone for long periods. How he dared to leave his gold unguarded I don't know, unless he figured that nobody knew he had it and so nobody would look for it. Anyhow, he let it lie and departed. Nobody on the Vichada knew where he went or what he did. I judged that he was up the Orinoco somewhere, taking a hand in something or other for Coronel Funes. But I didn't give much thought to him for awhile. He was out of my reach, and I had something else to take up my attention.

Until now I had always gotten on well with any Indians I met; not only the Guahibos, but the smaller nations in the same general territory. Oh, yes, there are others. There are the Salibas on the upper Vichada, the Puraritos and the Achaguas up near the Meta, the Cuibas, and so on. Those Cuibas are a bad lot—the fellows who do most of the killing along the lower Meta—but they never came over into my grounds to bother me, and I let them alone. Among the others, though, I was welcome wherever I went. But now came a change. The Guahibos treated me just as before, but the other chaps began to act suspicious and cold.

After I had been at home long enough to grow restless I went out on one of my rambling trips, traveling north and east. And at little isolated settlements where I had previously been treated in a friendly way, I now found the people sour and slow to oblige me. They didn't care to talk to me. They growled questions to my Guahibos, asking why I came there, where I had been before coming there, and so on. They watched every move I made. They kept arrows and spears ready at hand, too. They never made any threatening move, but there was something threatening in the air around those places. And neither I nor my men could understand why this was so.

At first I thought some cause of unfriendliness had arisen between the Guahibo nation and their neighbors, and that I was suspected of having a hand in it. Those things do happen among Indians, just as among white men, and sometimes they result in a little war. But my men told me they knew of no trouble. So we were puzzled until, up on a *caño* of the Meta, I dug the truth out of a petty chief more friendly than the rest.

"Hunting of slaves has begun again," he said. "Men hunt us with dogs and guns. If we run we are caught and torn by the dogs. If we fight we are shot. If we yield we are taken away to work and die under the whip. Our children are carried off and sold. Our women are ruined. The men who do this come from up the Meta."

I scowled and growled. This business of enslaving the Indians is nothing new, of course; but there had not been any of it recently in that region, and I didn't like to see it start again. It always makes them wild and upsets things generally.

"That is bad," I grumbled. "But why should that make people cold toward me? You all know me. You know I have no hand in such work."

"One of the men leading the hunters looks much like Sito Cot," he answered, watching me closely. "Sito Cot," you understand, is the Indian pronunciation of Sixto Scott.

I STARED. Then I jumped up and swore. The thing was plain enough now. Some man as big as I, looking like me, was doing this dirty work. None of it was being done in Guahibo land. Here was I, roaming around and visiting—perhaps spying—at small places; and the small places are always the ones raided by the slavers. Worse yet, I was known to go to the Meta towns now and then. To the suspicious Indian mind it surely would look as if I were the head slaver. And even though I had always treated the Indians squarely, that wouldn't prevent them from suspecting me if there seemed reason. It is born and bred in them to distrust all white men. They may know you for twenty years as a fair dealer, but still a spark of suspicion will smolder in them, ready to grow into a fire if something happens to fan it alive.

"This man and his deeds are unknown to me," I declared. "And any man who says Sixto Scott does this thing is a liar, and you are fools to believe it. You have not seen the hunters?"

"No. They have not yet come here. But the word goes about. There are two commanders. The other is a short man with much black hair on his face. They have twelve men with guns, and fierce dogs. They move about. None knows when or where they will strike."

"If they strike any place where I am they will strike no longer," I promised. "What is more, I shall go to look for them."

And I left the place and returned toward my own country. On the way back I asked questions of all I saw, trying to learn where the slavers were at work at that time. Nobody seemed to know. They had raided on the Caño Caribe and other creeks leading into the Meta; at the head of the RioTomo, and also on the little Rio Meseta, both lying between the Meta and the Vichada. Now these places are far apart, and it was clear that, as the friendly chief had told me, nobody could judge where the gang would appear next. So, after doing what I could to make it plain that I was not implicated in the matter, I went home.

To my own people I gave the word that slavers were out, and that if any Guahibo settlement was attacked a runner should be sent at once to me. I picked some good bowmen, too, and told them to be ready to move with me at any hour. But nothing came of it. News of other raids came from time to time, but always outside my own territory. The Guahibos at a distance from me became uneasy, though, and every now and then a few would come in to make sure that I was at my own place. I saw that the idea was steadily gaining ground that somehow I was mixed up in the thing; and once an idea gets into an Indian head it is hard to get out. Sooner or later, on some other rambling trip, some fool might put an arrow into my back just to make sure that I would do no harm.

Finally I went to the Meta and tried a little detective work among the villagers there, but with no luck. Slaving is against the law, of course, and not a man would admit that he knew any such thing was going on. If I could have stayed a few weeks at Orocué or some such place, I might have caught the slavers coming in with a batch of prisoners. But I could hardly remain long away from my headquarters while the raids were going on; it would look altogether too suspicious to the Indians. So I put back.

And then, by pure luck, I stumbled into exactly what I wanted.

For no very good reason, I started home by a roundabout route, cruising down the Meta for some distance and then making an overland march toward the head of the Rio Tomo, which starts not far south of the Meta. The ground in there is all open savanna, easy to walk through; but the view is not very extensive, being obstructed by trees wherever there is water and by small *cerros*, hills, scattered here and there. Thus a chap is likely to meet something unforeseen almost anywhere.

Well, we were plodding along toward a good-sized *morichal*—a water-hole where *moriche* palms grow, when suddenly out broke shooting and yelling and barking of dogs. We stopped dead, looking around but seeing no life. The noise was coming from the other side of the *morichal*. After listening to it a few seconds we realized what it meant. I gave my men quick orders, and they dropped their little food-packs and came after me, carrying only their bows, arrows and spears. Every man of them had both kinds of weapons; but there were only six of them, and I had the only rifle in our party. Seven men with one gun, going against twelve men with guns—and savage dogs—are rather likely to stub their toes. But we had one big advantage; the other fellows didn't know we were coming.

We cut around the end of the *morichal* and then headed straight for the noises. The shooting stopped, but the yells and screams and barks went on. One young Indian popped out of the bush and ran like the wind, trying to get away. But after him came two big, ugly dogs that caught him in a dozen leaps and put him down. They tore him frightfully.

They were still at him when two of my men reached them. Then they turned with savage snarls. That was as far as they got. My boys thrust their ten-foot *tigre* lances, and they dropped with one wild yell. The young Indian died too, later on, from loss of blood.

We slid into the bush, and soon reached a small clearing beside the water. In it was a little tribe-house, about twenty Indians—several dead or dying—half a dozen yellow gunmen, and four more dogs. The *mestizos* and the dogs were driving the Indians together into a huddle, the men beating the prisoners with guns or whips and the dogs biting as they chose. Fully half of the Indians left alive were women, and they were screaming in fear and pain. Their men were dumb, but cowed.

I counted the slavers, and saw only six. Then out from the house came a fellow as big as I, kicking along a young girl and laughing at her screams. This, I knew, must be the man who had been making trouble for me. I stepped out in the open, with gun cocked.

THE SAW me at once. We wasted no time in talk. His rifle jumped up to an aim. But he never shot. I was a little quicker on the trigger.

Then I let go at the others. They were so astonished that they were slow in getting into action, and I downed two of them before I had to duck into cover. At the same time my boys put arrows through two more who stood clear of the prisoners. The fifth was grabbed from behind by some of the captured Indians, who wrenched his gun away and brained him with it. The sixth tried to run into the bush, shooting as he went; but three arrows got him at the same time.

The dogs came for my Indians, but not for me; they knew better than to attack a white man with a gun. The Guahibos took care of them handily; they simply lifted the points of their dropped spears high enough to catch the beasts as they ran in or sprang.

That cleaned up the lot. The rest of the gang—the other six men and the short, heavy-bearded leader—were not there. One of the men I had shot was still alive, though nearly gone. Of him I asked—

"Where are your companions?"

He moved his head a little backward, in a way that made me think the others were a good distance off.

"You divided into two parties?" I questioned. "The others raid elsewhere?" He nodded.

"Who are the leaders?" I demanded then. "Who is this big brute, and who is the short one?"

He grinned nastily, and his lips moved. I bent close. Much good it did me.

"Go to ——!" he whispered, and died.

I walked over to the big man and studied him. He did look a good deal like me, though the resemblance was more in the build than in the face. He was yellow, not white, and slit-eyed, and much thicker of lip than I. But his nose and jaw were much like mine, and with his sombrero pulled well down he could easily be taken for Sixto Scott at first sight, especially by a scared Indian who took only one look and then ran. And the reports that he was Sixto Scott had, of course, been spread by just such Indians: the few who dived at once into the bush or the water and managed to lie hidden until their homes were raided and the raiders gone.

I went through the fellow's clothes, but found nothing to show who he was. So I took his gun, cartridges, machete, and poniard, and told my Guahibos to get the weapons of the other dead men. The Indians who had just been prisoners did some growling over this; they wanted those things themselves. But I shut them up quickly.

"You fools," I said, "guns belong only in the hands of men who fight. I and my men did the fighting here and we will take the spoils. You killed only one of these slavers. You can have his weapons. The rest are ours. Let me hear any more growling and I will give you another taste of the whip."

I picked up one of the slave-whips—a wicked thing made from *vaca marina* hide—and the sight of it made them shrink.

"Now," says I, "you know me, do you not? I am Sixto Scott. And from now on you will tell all men that Sixto Scott has killed the big hunter of slaves, and that he will do the same to the short one when he catches him. Yes?"

"Yes," they agreed.

"*Bueno*. See that you do not forget. Now bring in from the savanna a man of yours hurt by the dogs," I ordered them. "I am going on."

And, with no more talk, I left them. My Guahibos, proud as peacocks, brought along the weapons. Each of them now had a rifle—I gave the one taken from the big man to my subcommander—and with these and the knives and their own arms they were almost too heavily equipped. But they didn't mind. Any Indian will go through —— and high water for a gun.

We scouted awhile in the savanna round about, hoping to find the short man and his crowd and make a clean job of it. But we never found a trace. So we headed homeward again. The lie about Sixto Scott had been nailed, anyway, and that was what had bothered me most. And I felt that when the short man found his partner and all his men and dogs had disappeared he would quit slaving. And that is just what happened. The raiding stopped then and there.

It was a long time before I learned who that short man was. I thought he must be some Meta *mestizo*, like the other fellow. But he wasn't. If I had swung in a somewhat different direction on that random march of mine I should have met him and—before or after shooting—recognized him. While his partner was raiding that little place he was herding a gang of slaves up along the Meta, bound for market. He reached that market, too, and sold out. So, while the big fellow was getting killed, he escaped untouched and made money.

He was Jorge Padillo. Justice was working as usual.

VIII

YES, sir, that was Jorge Padillo. On the one hand he was steadily enriching himself by trading with Indians; on the other he made some quick money by trading in Indians—hunting them down with dogs, killing some of them to terrorize the rest, selling the others into slavery and torment and death on the plantations or in the mines. True enough, he didn't do this to the Guahibos, and he didn't do it very long to anybody; but that was only because he didn't dare. Given the chance of profit and safety, he would have sold Guahibos as readily as strange Indians.

As I say, it was a long time before I found this out. Oh yes, I had thought of Padillo while this was going on; but I had dismissed the suspicion for two reasons:

because the slavers had come from the Meta, and because he was said to have a heavy beard. Jorge wore only a mustache, and it takes time to grow a real beard. It never occurred to me that the whiskers might be false.

This was the truth of the thing, as I finally got it from a Colombian trader. Padillo, on his way to Bolívar, had picked up the big *mestizo*—one Pepe Pimentel—near the mouth of the Meta, where he had been left to starve after a quarrel with a Colombian river-captain. During the Orinoco voyage the pair hatched the slave-raiding plan, Pepe agreeing to provide the dogs if Jorge would get rifles and ammunition. When they came back Pepe worked his way up the Meta on a trading ship, got men and dogs and went overland to the Rio Tomo; paddled down this, and met Jorge at the Orinoco.

Jorge had the guns—probably bought from one of the Funes garrisons—and a big false beard which he must have got at Bolívar. He wore this heavy, hot thing on his face all through his slaving operations. But one night when he was drunk at a Meta town he took it off and bragged of his cleverness. The men drinking with him at the time thought it a great joke. They couldn't afford to tell it, though, because they were handling the slaves he brought in.

His object in disguising himself, of course, was to prevent any word from reaching the Guahibos as to what he was doing. Their hammocks were his regular source of income; and they have no use for slavers. That was one reason for his keeping out of Guahibo territory, too; he was so well known there that he might be recognized by his build or his voice or his walk. But he had another reason besides this; he knew Pepe looked a good bit like me, and he was quite willing to turn all suspicion toward me.

As soon as he found that something had happened to Pepe he quit the game and made haste back to his *sitio*. I doubt if he knew just what had hit his partner when he left the Meta, but he must have learned the truth soon after reaching the Vichada. The news that I and my boys had killed the big slaver and all his men and dogs made a great story for the Guahibos to talk over, and it traveled fast. So Jorge must have heard the principal facts quite speedily. And if he got all the details, he learned that I had asked a dying *mestizo* for the names of the leaders, and that the man had whispered something in reply; also, that I had promised to shoot the short man as soon as I caught him. That would worry him a good bit, you may well believe. Even if he succeeded in dodging me, I had only to tell the Guahibos who that short man was, and he would be through. The bottom would drop out of his hammock business *pronto*, and he would be lucky if some bad accident didn't befall him.

So, I think, he decided that the Vichada was growing unhealthy for him and that he had better quit it. He had been trading there now for a number of years, and between his hammocks and the Velásquez deal and other things he had built up a very decent bank account at Bolívar. There was his box of gold, too. Nothing had ever been heard of Miguel or Lolita, and there now was very little chance of trouble from them. And he had his slave money. All told, he could well afford to get out and start a big trading store in Bolívar, or even in Caracas. But the hammock crop was nearly due again, and naturally he didn't care to sacrifice several thousand *bolívares*' worth of business by leaving too soon. So he stayed on, kept his mouth shut about his plans, and made ready to do his usual collecting.

I may be wrong about this. Perhaps he had no intention of abandoning his trade at that time. But I believe he did. Two or three things indicated it. For one thing, he sent away the Guahibos he usually had around his place, and got several *mestizos* to act as *peones* and boat crew. And again, he sent messengers to all the Guahibo settlements with orders not only to hurry the hammock work, but to make more than they had agreed to weave, and to have them all ready at a certain time. Connecting these developments with his probable thoughts, it looks as if he had become a bit afraid of the Indians, had decided to make this cargo his last, and so wanted to make it a record-breaker.

At any rate, when he moved up the Vichada he was in a fever to get every possible *chinchorro* aboard in the shortest possible time. This was unusual. He generally took business easily along the way, making a leisurely visit at each place, talking loudly to the Indians and showing them how great and important he was bullying them around as he bargained, but keeping them good-humored. But now he was in a hurry, scolded because there were not more hammocks and pushed on to the next place as fast as he could make his crew work. The Guahibos wondered what ailed him.

AS I told you, he had sent out orders that more than the usual number of hammocks should be made. There was not time for the stringing of many more, but most of the people had done what they could, and for the first two days he was getting a little better than the normal lot. On the third day, though, he came into a place where the Indians had been making new boats, which were more important to them than the hammock work, and so only a few *chinchorros* were ready. Every man who trades with Indians meets with this sort of thing at times, and learns to expect it. The only thing to do is to take whatever may be had and hope for better luck at the next place. But Padillo now flew into a rage.

"You dogs and sons of dogs," he raved, "you are too lazy and worthless to live! You promised me twice as many hammocks as you have made. You are liars! Stand there and grin, will you? Then grin at this, you lousy animals! I will bring a pestilence on this place! I will put on all of you a burning fever! I will burn the bowels out of you and make you food for the vultures! I will teach you, you snakes, to lie to Jorge Padillo!"

That was the worst threat he could think of. The Indians, you know, believe a white man can do that thing; he can open some mysterious box or bottle and let out some horrible, fatal disease. And your Indian is more afraid of pestilence than of almost any other danger, because he has no way of fighting it. So this furious promise of Padillo's scared the Guahibos as nothing else could have done.

If he had been a stranger, they probably would have killed him at once in self-defense, so that he would be unable to turn the pestilence loose on them. But for years now they had been in the habit of taking him good-naturedly, and habit is strong in Indians. Besides, they knew they had promised him more hammocks, and they felt themselves somewhat in the wrong. So they hesitated, wondering what to do.

Then up spoke the *capitán* of the place, saying:

"Do not do this. Hold back your plague. We have been slow, but there still is time. All of us will work hard and make more *chinchorros*. Stop here again when you come back down the river. You shall have all we can make. Only keep your pestilence from us."

At that Padillo cooled down.

"*Bien.* It is agreed," he said. "Give me the *chinchorros* when I return, and all will be well. I will keep the plague from you until then. But if I find that you have lied to me again—you know the punishment. Now go to work at once!"

He went back aboard and shoved off. And the Guahibos, much relieved but still worried, went at their job tooth and nail. They knew it would take him at least ten days, perhaps two weeks, to finish his work upstream and come back, and in that time they could make quite a number of nets.

And then, señor, there came about a queer thing. Before Padillo had been gone two days, one of the Indian women became very sick. By night another woman and a child were down. Within another twenty-four hours half the people in the place were sick to death, and the first three had died. Some sort of epidemic had hit them; something for which the medicine man knew no cure. Those who were not stricken by it could do nothing but stand dumbly around and watch their women and children and fathers and brothers squirm and moan and die. And those who died had a burning fever.

The medicine man said:

"It is the pestilence of Padillo. It is the burning sickness he said he would put on us. He promised to keep it from us until he came back. But he has lied. He has opened his box and sent death to us. And all because we were short a few *chinchorros!*"

The other men said nothing much. They looked at one another, and then they took their hardwood stabbing-spears and war-axes, their clubs and bows and arrows, and started west. They trotted overland, keeping near the river, traveling faster than they could have gone in canoes, and making much better time than Padillo in his wallowing *bongo*. They knew approximately where he ought to be at that time, and they kept going until they found him.

They caught up with him about midday,

at a little spot on the main river where he had tied up long enough to eat. He was sitting in the shade, with his rifle leaning against a tree beside him, and his *peones* were squatting near and chewing their *manioc*. One of the *mestizos* had a quick ear. He heard something moving quietly in the riverside bush and looked around. He saw ferns and *platanillo* leaves moving, and then made out brown faces.

"*Señor!*" he whispered. "*Indios!*"

Padillo looked and then jumped up, grabbing his gun. At that the Guahibos sprang at him from all sides. He fired one shot, but it went wild. Then a lance-head went through his right arm and the rifle dropped. The Indians closed in around him, faces hard and weapons lifted.

"What is this?" he yelled, recognizing them and shrinking back against the tree. "Are you mad? I—I am your friend—your good friend—"

"Snake!" hissed several of them. And a short stabbing-spear took him in the bowels.

Then he screamed. He was a dead man, and he knew it. But he yelled and sobbed and whined for mercy, trying to shove away the spear-points and clubs stabbing and striking him.

"*Dios! Diablo! Hombres! Amigos! Ten misericordia! O Dios, Dios!*" he screeched, sinking to his knees as they battered him down.

Then a hardwood war-ax, heavy as steel, swung down on his head. He slumped on his face and was still.

For a minute or two longer the Indians thrust and beat and hacked at him, mad with fury and blood. Then they drew away from him. There wasn't much of him left to work on.

The *peones*, in the meantime, had jumped aboard, cut the rope and shoved out. They were unarmed, except for a machete or two, and they were not fighting men anyway. Now the Guahibos turned to them. They could have killed every peon in the lot if they had tried. They had their bows and arrows, and the *bongo* was so near that they couldn't miss. But they never even raised a bow. They just stood glaring a minute or two at the *mestizos*, then turned away from them. They had come there to execute the man who had murdered their kin. They had done what they came for. They saw no justice in attacking the *peones*, who had not injured them. So they let them go.

They dropped their bloodstained weapons around the dead man, and they never picked them up. They stepped to the water, and every man of them washed himself clean of Padillo's blood as if it were poison. And then, keeping only their clean bows and arrows, they started walking calmly back home, giving no attention whatever to the boat and men out on the river. The thing was finished.

So that was the end of Jorge Padillo. For years and years he had been doing things that ought to have brought death to him, but had suffered no penalty. And then finally he was killed for something of which he wasn't guilty at all; for of course he had neither the power nor the intention of creating that pestilence he threatened. And he died just as I once told him he would, crying to God and devil and men for mercy, and finding none.

Queer, wasn't it?

IX

AS LUCK would have it, I was early in making my own collections that year, and I was on my way to the Orinoco when Padillo was killed. I found him a couple of days after the Guahibos left him. My men saw several vultures in the trees, and we halted to investigate. The birds had cleaned up with their usual thoroughness; but the rifle, the Indian weapons, the torn clothes and some pieces of paper lying around told the story quite plainly. We knew who had died there and how, though not why. The reason became clear enough, though, as soon as we talked to the Guahibos at the next settlement; and I got the rest of the story from Padillo's *peones*.

Those fellows were at the old *sitio* when I reached there, and a nervous crew they were. They had none too many brains among them, and they couldn't realize that the killers had deliberately let them go. To hear them tell it, you'd think they had been followed down the Vichada by an army or two of bloodthirsty savages. Every leaf that fluttered, every animal that rustled the bush and every sound in the night had been Indians creeping along the shore. They had slept little and eaten less. Now all they wanted was to take whatever they fancied from their master's house—they had already rummaged it pretty well—and get away to some safer place. I didn't hinder them. They had no use for the *chinchorros* they had brought back, as there was no market within hundreds of miles; so I added the nets to my own lot. The *mestizos* took their plunder and left in a canoe. And, as you can imagine, they told a terrible tale along the river about the Guahibos.

When they were gone I sat awhile in the dingy house, thinking about the things its owner had done. And I began to see ghosts. Not literally, of course; just in my mind. There was Gregorio, standing over yonder in a dark corner, holding his severed head under an arm and pointing an accusing hand at Padillo's empty chair. There was Marie Velásquez, her eyes cold with hate, watching the same chair and touching the poisoned dart in her breast. There was proud, insolent Miguel, dead in his hammock, but staring vengefully. And there was tragic Lolita, her face set, creeping to the door to launch her canoe on the black river of death. All these I saw as a man sees in memory those he has known. And there were others, dim and indistinct, moving about like transparent shadows—men I never had seen in life, but whom I knew to have been betrayed by Padillo and killed by Funes. It was a goodly company of phantoms that walked there. If I had known at that time about the false beard, I might have seen also some murdered Indians. But even without them I felt that justice had struck at last.

Yes, justice. Blind, blundering justice, I grant you; queer justice, and —— slow; but justice nevertheless. Padillo had lived on and on, but I began to see now that he had gotten some of his punishment while he lived; many a night he must have been tortured by those same ghosts. And in the end— Well, he had been a betrayer from the time when he first abandoned his family to poverty and want; and finally he found himself betrayed by a freak of fate—or, maybe, by the devil he served. Yes, *hombre*, I call it justice!

Well, thinking about these things I thought of others connected with them. One of them was Miguel's box of gold. And I wondered whether Padillo had ever dared to bank it. In fact, I had already puzzled on that point more than once, knowing what chances he would take if he tried it. So now I decided to poke around a bit. I knew that before I could come back from Bolívar the Funes men would carry off everything left and dig into every possible hiding-place, hunting for money. First come, first served.

Luck was with me. I found a space in the dirt floor of one room that looked a tiny bit different from the rest, and put my men to digging. Up came the box. I broke two machetes in forcing it open, but finally the lid gave way, and there was the gold.

Perhaps if I had looked further I might have found the slave money hidden elsewhere. But I didn't know about it then. And even if I had, I'd rather let that kind of money stay buried. Whether anybody ever found it I don't know or care. It never did Padillo any good, anyway.

My luck stood by me on the way down the river, too. The gold passed the garrisons at Maipures and Atures without detection. I didn't carry the box, of course. I wrapped each roll in a small parcel and hid it in the middle of a sack of *chinchorros*. The inspectors were not in the habit of examining my stuff very closely, because they knew I never dealt in anything but hammocks; so they just gave each sack a poke with a stick, saw that it yielded as usual, and let the lot go through. At Bolívar the federal men did nothing but count the sacks, take the customary tariff and sign my papers. All I had to do then was to reassemble the *condores* and bank them. To the cashier I carelessly said I had been doing some trading over in the mountains; and, since all the bank officers knew I was a Colombian, nobody doubted the story.

Then, after thinking over matters a little more, I went to a *padre* whom I happened to know, and told him as much as I thought best. First I gave him the news of the death of Jorge Padillo, which I had not yet mentioned around the town; and I suggested that steps be taken to find his wife and children, up in Guárico, and make sure that all his money went to them. I knew, you see, that unless the church took a hand in the thing they would never see a *centimo* of that money; it would all be gobbled by the dirty crook who happened to be governor of the Bolívar district at that time. I didn't say this, but the *padre* understood perfectly, and promised to see that justice was done. And it was done, too. Señora Padillo got every *peso* deposited by her worthy husband. That was a bit of real justice.

Besides that, I told the *padre* that two young friends of mine, named Miguel Moreno and Lolita, had been lost in the Orinoco rapids, and that I should like to have prayers said for the repose of their souls. And I gave the church a handsome contribution for the services. No, I'm not a good churchman; I never made such a donation before, and I have no intention of ever doing so again. It just seemed to me that it was a decent thing to do, and it made me feel a little easier about the gold. When the *padre* asked if I should like to have the church ask peace for Jorge too, I told him no, I didn't believe Jorge was entitled to it. And with that I went out.

So that was the final result of all Jorge Padillo's scheming. The money he piled up by trade and treachery went to the woman and children he had forsaken. The gold he got by murder fell to the church and to the man he most disliked; namely, Sixto Scott. When he had Gregorio killed he gave that same Sixto Scott a fine little wife. When he tried to make trouble for me with his false Sixto Scott he only succeeded in making me stronger with the Guahibos. And when he got himself killed he gave me the hammock trade of the whole Vichada.

YES, the whole river is mine now. All the Guahibos trade with me. Nobody lives at the old Padillo *sitio* these days, and nobody is likely to. There is a sort of curse on the place. To the Indians it is a reminder of the murderer who loosed a pestilence on an inoffensive little settlement, and of the treachery of white men in general. Every white or half-white man looking at it sees its master—a tricky fellow, maybe, señor, but a white man for all that—cruelly murdered by a pack of brown mad dogs for nothing at all. So everybody gives it a wide berth. The only one who ever stops there is this man Scott, who sees there some things nobody else sees, and has no reason to dread any of them. And, as everybody knows, Scott is more or less *loco*. If you do not believe it, señor, consider that he continues to live among the bloody Guahibos, who will assuredly kill him some day—*sí*, and perhaps will eat him! Of a truth, something is wrong with his brain.

Well, maybe so, maybe so; they have reason to think so. But I am still in good health, and I'll take my chances.—And now, sir, I can see by the stars that it is high time for us to sleep. *Buenos noches!* And a good rest to you!

CAJUN TRAVELERS

by Nevil Henshaw

THE old folk of the Louisiana Teche country were not blessed with railroads. In those days the Southern Pacific ended on the far bank of the Atchafalaya at Morgan City. Thence one traveled up country on the bayou, or around to Texas by way of salt water.

Yet there were compensations. At my own home landing, the captain of an outward bound steamboat tied up to the bank, and joined the family at dinner. In this way a guest, who had decided to leave at the last moment, was enabled to enjoy the meal himself, and afterward attend to his packing.

With the final coming of the railroad these leisurely days were over. The trains would not wait. One must be on time. And, if the trains themselves were late, it made no difference. The railroad had all the advantage.

At least this was the way the Cajuns looked at it, once they had become accustomed to this new method of travel. Missing an hour-late train by an hour, they would be told that they were sixty minutes late. Thus they would return an hour earlier the next day, to repeat the same experience.

And then there were certain customs of their own that did not jibe with those of the railroad. For example, one of the first Cajuns to make a trip, climbed aboard the rear platform of the last car. Etiquette demanded that he should announce himself and gain permission before entering. Accordingly he held on with one hand and knocked with the other at the car door until he was rescued by the conductor at the next stop, thirteen miles down the line.

And on entering, as was his habit, he shook hands with each passenger before finally taking his seat.

The Camp-Fire

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

ATLANTIS again, and some questions for the archeologists to answer. What are the probabilities of any civilization's being "entirely indigenous?"

Erie, Pennsylvania.

Many of those who read the Camp-Fire probably feel that Mr. Mundy's challenge of the generally accepted ideas about Cæsar and the domination of Rome has resulted in a healthy review of these subjects.

The writer is one of those who have read and enjoyed the Camp-Fire from its beginning. He has never before been inclined to offer his own thoughts for consideration. Even now he prefers to offer them in the form of questions instead of assertions.

THESE questions are suggested by Mr. John Murray Reynolds's statement on page 186, issue November 30th.

"The highly developed civilizations that arose in a few parts of the New World were *entirely indigenous.*"

Are there any *known* instances of *highly* developed civilizations which were entirely indigenous?

Are not those which are so classified by Mr. Reynolds those that we know only of their state in their best stages previous to their destruction by foreign conquest and lack all information regarding their development?

Do we not find that, wherever we do have complete information about the development of any given civilization, in each case they begin with a certain fund of civilization borrowed from some foreign predecessor on which initial fund they build their own characteristic culture according to their own national genius besides adding to it their own original conceptions which are not traceable to any foreign source?

Is not this illustrated by both the Roman and the Grecian cultures as well as their more recent successors?

Are not the myths and legends of both the Egyptians, who claimed that they received the rudiments of their civilization from the "Land of Punt" and the Sumero-Akkadians who tell how theirs were brought them by the "Fish-God Ea, who came up from the Sea?"

Is there not a somewhat similar myth found in connection with one of the Mexican or Central American developments about "Quetzalcoatl," a god of different character and appearance who brought them certain unfamiliar elements from abroad?

[The preceding quotations are very likely inaccurate, because I have no books at hand to verify names or other details.]

DOES not this similarity of historical and legendary origins lead us to scrutinize very carefully any assertion that any culture is a self-contained thing of single origin developed by the one people whom we find in possession of it when we come in contact with it and them?

Should we not, rather, while not denying that there may be such things as "highly developed civilizations which were entirely indigenous," check the contrary hypothesis that civilizations are commonly composite beginning with a borrowed foundation, modifying what is built upon it by refinements in accordance with racial genius of their own culture as well as with their own progress in the arts they possess, and finally adding certain original ideas which can not be found at all in the original borrowed fund of culture, instead of rejecting this hypothesis solely because our present information does not help us to decide for or against it?

These questions are put forward for discussion by Messrs. John Murray Reynolds, Joseph Everett Ward, Dr. William E. Ward and any other interested archeologists.—C. M. SPALDING.

* * *

TWO letters from Bill Adams anent his story—or is it an article?—in this issue. Or, rather, bits from two of his letters:

Some reader may find fault with the story when it comes to eight apprentices going aloft to stow a t'gall'n's'l. Usually a t'gall'n's'l took four hands to stow it. It depended of course on the size of the ship, and of her sails. But I remember a morning somewhere round 55 south when the fore t'gall'n's'l worked adrift, on the weather side. I was big and husky then, and I went aloft with Petersen, a stout Dane, another man whose name I've lost, and a very healthy apprentice—four of us to pick up one side of a fore t'gall'n's'l. We'd be up there yet I think if the mate hadn't come up and given us a hand. As it was it took us a good many minutes to get the sail under our chests and the gaskets passed. So in sending eight boys aloft for that job I don't think I do wrong. Four of them were only little kids. But I thought I'd mention this anyway.

Relieve the wheel and lookout. Go below the watch. Cheer-oh.—BILL ADAMS.

Man, how I remember that raid! and that cussed cat, and the Old Man's hard face when he stood at our door. We swiped every last thing from his stores almost. But he never said or did a thing about it after the first outburst. He gave us good references. In after years he said to me, "Why did the owners have to feed us so miserably?" We used to cuss the Old Man for everything, quite unconscious that he was as much a slave as were we. Perhaps one ought not blame the owners. They were being crowded by steam. But the feed was vile. The system was wrong somewhere.

I remember, too, the time when the men hung back, afraid to go to the t'gallantyard, and how the boys went up. It was blowing like glory. It looked as though the mast must go. If it had gone it would likely have taken other tophamper with it. No knowing what might have happened. Queer things happen at sea.

The story is fact in the main with a touch of fiction interwoven.

The guy who got his head busted was me. That's fact. So are the bacon and doughnuts. And what the Old Lady said about my honesty.

But I wasn't the one who led the way aloft that time. I was just a thieving young blackguard. I wish I were back, crawling on my stomach over the hard-tack tanks by match-light, with the Old Man sleeping just over my head, and canned tripe to beckon me on. Great to be young, wasn't it?

"Old Stormy's dead and gone to rest,
Way, aye, Stormalong,
Of all the skippers he was best,
Aye, aye, aye, mister Stormalong."

—BILL ADAMS.

* * *

YOU will remember that when we sent a check to Noel H. Stearn for his poem in this issue it came back unclaimed and we asked Camp-Fire for help in finding him. Here is the first report that came in, under a postmark that looks like Britain Beach, B. C , but carrying no address, so that I can only now thank comrade Wilson:

The Noel Stearn you ask about may be the same fellow I ran across last year in the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California. He and I were snowed in together with my partner in a two-by-four cabin. He wasn't sure just where he would hit for next but he talked about the Pesheeke Country. He seems a nice enough fellow. I suspected he went to college some time as he had a heap of good songs but was a rotten poker player. He has a brother living in Pasadena, you might try him.—GIL WILSON.

Passing over this biting comment on the short-comings of colleges as teachers of the great American game, I might mention that several others of you reported. And finally Mr. Stearn reported for himself. You'll recall that I felt it was no more than fair, in return for the trouble in finding him, that he should report to all of us from time to time on the progress of his grub-stake (the need of which caused him to write the poem) and on the progress of his prospecting trip.

Madison, Wisconsin.

I'm sure sorry to have caused you so much trouble, but since I left Republic I was at Gwinn, Amasa, Felch, Lansing, Loretta and Madison. Your letters got to me here in Madison because it looks as if I'll be here till next May when I start for the Cassiar. Because I'm going to make it. The grub-stake is coming fine. I even picked up some backers besides you. Sure I'll tell you what happens to the $120. Most of it goes to get me a Savage high power feather-weight rifle and ammunition. I'll report when I come back on how the rifle works. If I don't report inside of a year you'll know it missed fire sometime when it shouldn't.

I suppose it's a dirty trick to thank you for buying one thing by sending you a lot more. But I paid 60 cents to have these typed and after all I guess it's part of your job to read them, though it ain't part of mine to write them. And besides, you can thank me for not sending you a lot more I've got.—NOEL STEARN.

Extracts from later letters bring him up to date of this writing, and in one of them he follows Camp-Fire custom and introduces himself to all of us on the occasion of his first contribution to our magazine:

I got my rifle and she is sure a beauty. I am not used to a rifle because I always used a .45 automatic even in the Sierras but I am going to have a good time getting used to it. The grub-stake is getting along fine. We start in May.

Dawson, you may remember, was the man who suggested his sending the poem to our magazine. Our thanks to Mr. Dawson and I am not in position to quarrel with his estimate of himself as a judge.

It looks as if I won't be around when you print "I'll Be a Hardy Captain" because I'm heading into Mexico next week or so, although I didn't expect to trail any this winter on account of working up my grub-stake. Going down into the Sierra Madre Mountains out from Chihuahua as the guide, protector and sort of first assistant sub bosun's mate prospector to a full-fledged geologist friend of my boss. I don't know what I'm getting paid but the boss says it'll be plenty, so the grub-stake will get along all right. I may be back soon enough to see "I'll Be a Hardy Captain" come out because I'm coming back to Madison if I have any time to spare between this trip and the Cassiar. I got a friend I think is in Nueva Laredo but I'd rather come back here and learn more minerals and my boss says I have to. His name is Aldrich and he's a geologist too.

I saw Dawson in Chicago and he was right pleased that you bought the poem because he said that made him a good judge.—NOEL STEARN.

Thursday Night.

Your letter caught me just in time because I leave tomorrow for Chihuahua. Going in a Pullman, too. I don't know whether I'll have an address in Mexico but I won't be there long—month or two. If I have one I'll send it to you. When I head for the Cassiar I won't have any address for three months. Expect to outfit in Vancouver and come back to Hazelton when winter threatens.

As for this autobiography I haven't got anything to write but of course have high hopes, though I am twenty-nine years old already. I was born in La Fayette, Indiana, and raised in the foothills of the Ozarks till I got dragged to St. Louis and stuck in a high school which turned out all right. Then I went out to California and went to school again for a while at Stanford and then the war came and I got into the army, then served along the border. And then I crossed the country a couple of times on foot but never farther east than Detroit (except up in Canada I got as far as Quebec). I got curious about a few things and went to school again for a while at Wisconsin University and I've been sort of prospecting ever since. I did a little prospecting in the Sierra Nevadas of California and the Totogatic Lake region and the copper country of the Lake Superior region and the Pesheekee country and the iron country of Upper Michigan, most of it second-handed—I mean for somebody else like the way I'm going to Mexico now.

This Cassiar trip I've got some backing for now and it's on my own. I've got more dope, I think, than some of the old-timers—about minerals and rocks, I mean—and I might even hang up my sign as a geologist compared to some I've run across who admit it openly. I take kindly to moving around but I get bawled out about it often enough. But I come by it honestly because both of my grandfathers were pioneers and my dad is no slouch either. He helped build the first railroad across the swamp country north of Lake Superior. These things I write are done, rainy days, long nights, and waits, partly because I'm a bum poker hand and partly because I can't help it. You better not print all this but tell the folks I'm a prospector and that sums it all up—everything in prospect—nothing in hand.—NOEL STEARN.

Nowhere in particular.

My address is, care of Hotel ——, Chihuahua, Mexico. And I get mail once a week. We're living in one of those adobe haciendas with a big Scotch, gray-haired (what there is of it) prospector, a Chinese cook, two Indian ponies, a Mexican dog, and an Irish pig—only the horses don't come into the hacienda. We're out in the Santa Eulalia mountains, two days from Chihuhua by burro or about one day by foot, traveling light.

Expect to be back up in Madison about the first of March.—NOEL STEARN.

So now we are all set to watch what comes as a result of the grub-stake toward which our magazine has contributed—for value received. Probably the next word will come from the far north. And here's luck to the trip.

* * *

SOMETHING from Arthur O. Friel as to the real people and facts back of his complete novelette in this issue. The *Jorge Padillo* incident he mentions is referred to on pages 206-8 of his book "The River of the Seven Stars, Harper & Brothers."

It's a queer yarn, maybe; but, as in some other tales of mine, the queerest part is the truest of all.

The chap whom I've named *Jorge Padillo* got himself smeared by the Guahibos for the exact reason stated. I have several of the bloodstained hardwood weapons with which they did the job. The abandoned sitio stands at the Vichada mouth, just as I've said. I don't know that *Jorge* ever did all the things I've attributed to him in the story; but all those things—and worse—have been done thereabouts by other men. The slave-raiding is going on right now, for that matter. I saw a despatch from Bogota not long ago which said the Colombian Government would try to stop it. Another empty gesture, of course.

Sixto Scott is, like many of my characters, a composite. The fellow forming the principal part of him lives fifteen days up the Vichada and trades in hammocks; that is, he did, three years ago. The last time I saw him some of the Guahibos were talking of doing him in, and maybe they did it after I left. They were a bit sore about his borrowing the wife of one of them. The Indios are somewhat notional about that sort of thing.

The geography and ethnography of the region are as near correct as I can make them. Both are based on the best maps extant and checked up by personal information given me by habitants.—ARTHUR O. FRIEL.

* * *

IT WOULD help immeasurably if we had more ministers like this one. There are more, of course, many more. But we need still more.

Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

The "bombshell" prepared by Jos. Lyndall, of Philadelphia, and fired at your readers, issue of Jan. 30th, was loaded with a lot of hard common sense and, in my opinion, some nonsense. He seems to think that all ministers are "fanatics" and I am willing to admit that we have a lot of things in frock coats going around with a "holier than thou" attitude, damning everybody that does not see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and trying to force righteousness on the people at the point of the bayonet. I am a minister of the Gospel but do not belong to the above class.

YES, we have a lot of fool laws but I do not think prohibition is one of them. We are not enforcing this law because the great majority of the people don't want it enforced. The "Anti-weapon law" is not only a fool law, it is a dangerous law, as it leaves us at the mercy of the thug, the housebreaker and the bandit and renders us powerless to defend our lives and homes.

As to ministers being in politics why shouldn't they? Haven't we the same rights all Americans are supposed to have? But I know of no "minister's organization" such as he describes. Yes, we are a bunch of boobs to sit still and do nothing untill these fool laws are passed and then cuss and rant and try to prevent their enforcement. Why not organize a B.P.A. (Boob's Protective Association) and do something more effective than cussing? I am perfectly serious about this. If the people had a national organization to combat the schemes of fanatics we would not have so many fool laws and the safe and sane laws would be respected and enforced. If you publish this, give my name. I never shoot from ambush.—(REV.) A. R. ADAMS.

HOWITZERS on mule-back. Haven't we met them before in our stories or at Camp-Fire? A word from John Dorman as to his story in this issue:

Gulfport, Florida.

Most of the story is pure fiction (of a sort, at least) but the incident of the mule with the howitzer mounted on her back is supposed to be true. At least, a retired sergeant of the old 5th Cavalry told it to me very much as I've written it. He heard the story back in the seventies from a regular army man who had served in the Mexican war. As the tale came to me, it was Capt. Robert E. Lee of Civil War fame who suggested mounting the howitzers on mule-back. Lee was at that time, according to my informant, Quartermaster for General Scott. —JOHN DORMAN.

* * *

IT IS interesting to speculate as to what you would think if you started reading the following letter at this point: "Brown mice that waltzed; brown mice with red eyes that did not waltz; white mice with brown spots that did and did not waltz; lilac mice with and without the waltzing." Well, what *do* you think?

On the contrary. It is not a case of delirium tremens. It is not even a joke. It's science.

The letter is an interesting one called forth by Raymond S. Spears' story, "The Were-Cougar," and bears out Mr. Spears' statement at an earlier Camp-Fire that the theme of that story is not so fantastic as it might seem to the uninitiated. Mr. Edington's life work is the cross-breeding of plants and he deals with the "were-cougar" from the scientific angle.

His postscript goes back to Mr. Solomons' statement in "A.A." that few white men had ever crossed the Endicott range in Alaska.

Sawtelle, California.

I was especially interested in this particular story inasmuch as in my own work, that of plant hybridization, I meet with almost constantly some of the little known laws which govern the propagation of new species, or varieties of known species. Perhaps I should say that I meet up with the results and these results more and more convince me of the absolute lack of knowledge we mortals have of the basic causes lying behind and going into the making of those creatures and plant lives which science has designated "mutations" or "sports."

IN HIS letter Mr. Spears says: "And these 'sports' not infrequently appear in nature, black foxes being inbred reds, albino and melanistic freaks being thus probably explained."

In Darbyshire's book on the Mendelian Law, one chapter of which deals with the experiments conducted over a period of years upon the resultant mutations or sports obtained from the crossing of the common brown mouse with the so called Japanese Waltzing Mouse. Briefly these mutations being brown mice that waltzed; brown mice with red eyes that did not waltz; white mice with brown spots that did and that did *not* waltz; lilac mice with and without the waltzing strain, etc.

This work of Darbyshire's, while not the most technical on the subject, yet seems to me to be the most concise and readily assimilated work on the Mendelian Law, translations of which one can also obtain from almost any good public library.

THE POINT I am getting at is this. Laying aside the traditions and theories concerning humans who have shown tendencies to revert to the animal kingdom or rather to show like tendencies to some member of lower animal life, there is also a very definite law covering all crosses between one form or variety of life and another of the *same* species. All of the vast amount of research which has been done since Mendel's treaties seems to prove that Mendel in his experiments with the common pea discovered a very definite law which in all nature and all life governs the results of the crossing of various varieties of any certain species.

Mind, I am not setting myself up as an authority. I am not. My own work has been hampered by the fact that at the beginning (our work being mainly with the gladiolus) we are dealing in all our crosses for new varieties with varieties that are themselves multiple hybrids or mutations of the original species. Hence at the beginning we do not know what various multiple cells we have to deal with; what particular cell will predominate; the reason why it does nor the reason why seemingly predominate strains should seem to entirely disappear in the seedlings obtained after we have made definite cross pollinizations with certain definitely hoped for results in mind.

FOR EXAMPLE, one cross I made between a bronze red and a pale lavender pink flower. The seedlings proved to be no two alike, which of course we expected. One was like one parent; none showed the other parentage; and they were in color: a red, white with brown spots, a pale pink, spotted; and a pure deep lavender blue, not to mention other variations of the color scale.

Sports appear, not only in the flower kingdom but in *all* life as mutations or variations of the original strain. But I think I am safe in saying there never was a sport possible which had for its basic dominant cell one *not* existent in the original strain.

AS TO albinos, Darbyshire gives very definitely the causes of this peculiar mutation. If my memory serves me right he goes so far as to say that were it possible to conduct such experiments, very definite mutations could be produced and predicted in humans, such as to the color of the eyes of the offspring, etc. And, as Mendel stated, always the relation between the dominant and recessive strains of any cross are in the ratio of three to one.

This I am stating from memory, but I believe I am correct. Unfortunately I have not a copy of either Mendel's Law or Darbyshire before me as I write. But, if Mendel and those who have followed and tested his theory are right, then the characteristics found in various individuals or varieties of a species are *not* due to the spiritual or mental qualities, but rather to the predominate cell sap or properties which themselves went to govern that mutation.

Each individual, whether plant or human, contains thousands of life cells which themselves not only are the results of various crosses but may be as well some of the original cells from the first creation of that species. That is, *every individual*, as every plant, may contain the primitive cell of his ancestor undiluted, floating in the life stream but not predominant; too weak to show or even color the life of that particular individual. Again it is possible for that primitive cell to become *dominant* in some mutation of the species, and then we would have, for our definite characteristic in this individual, the primitive characteristics of that individual's ancestor. (As witness the were-cougar.)

This happens in the flower kingdom. Many times our multiple hybrids will develop a seed which itself will throw back across the generations of mutations to its wild parent. I believe the same is true of *all* life, which to me would more rationally explain the reasons why in certain individuals we detect characteristics which would almost lead us to say with certainty they were a throw-back. And I certainly believe that the mental and spiritual attributes of all individuals—that is their native or instinctive reactions mental and spiritual—are to a great degree *governed* by the dominant cell which is itself the *cause* of their physical and structural being.

Man, as he is today, is, like the gladiolus, a multiple hybrid or mutation from the original. Through ages and ages the process of cross pollenization has been going on, between individuals of widely "inherent" dominant and recessive strains. Each individual different cross has resulted in all sorts of mutations of the two originals, like the mice cross. Some waltz and some do not, some take after one parent and some the other, etc., etc. And with each succeeding cross more and different cells are involved and more mutations are possible. But never, I think, are the original cells lost, or their properties. They lie dormant; many times they are submerged. But again along will come a result from a union which will throw back to the original strain which has not been dominant in that family perhaps for many generations. And *that* life cell makes the mental and spiritual qualities of that individual. That is, at the start. Contacts, teachings, education, environment all may modify it—undoubtedly do. But underneath, the cell structure of that individual remains pretty much the same. That is, from the standpoint of passing on that property to future generations.

In his story Mr. Spears has perhaps intentionally taken pretty much this angle. The parentage of the Were-Cougar on one side went back to the jungle people or Leopard people of the Naga tribes, who themselves definitely showed this animal characteristic. And from that angle I think the story far from "off the trail."—A. C. EDINGTON.

P.S.—Some time back in "Ask Adventure," Mr. Solomons in covering a question about the Endicott Range in Alaska, said that few white men had ever been across it. I have a very close friend here, an old Alaskan sourdough, old not in years but in service, former Deputy United States Marshal out of Fairbanks, who, alone, save for an Esquimo guide and his family, crossed the Endicott Range in the dead of winter, from Chief Christian's Chandalar Indian village to the Flaxman Islands off the Arctic Coast, thence, alone, back to the head-waters of Wind River where he located that which necessitated the trip, the body of a prospector named Clark who had been murdered at Wind River. From there he again made his way alone, avoiding the Chandalar Village back to Fairbanks, Alaska, with the dead man's body. Bert Hansen is his name, and he made this trip without any maps of that country, with no knowledge of the country above Chief Christian's village, save rumor and word of mouth; blazed his own trails; was, I think, the only man, white man to ever drive a dog team from Fairbanks to Flaxman Islands either winter or summer. He did this in the dead of winter, leaving Fairbanks on the 9th of November. On the return he was ambushed, shot at, succeeded in killing the Indian who had attempted to murder him and, with all his cache destroyed over some hundreds of miles, yet made it back to safety with the body he went after, his dogs bringing him into Fort Yukon, Hanson himself lying unconscious over the handle-bars of his sled.

John Cornell, census taker for the United States Government, also made the trip to the Indian village, also to the Endicotts, also the Flaxman Islands, but this was in the summer, and as to whether he was alone or not I can not say. But undoubtedly Hansen is one of the few men who ever made the trip by dog-team in the winter, if not the only one.

I have his notes, his diary, several books in the Chandalar Indian language. Have also many of the pictures Hansen took while on this trip, here at my home, including one of Chief Christian and his wife. Should Mr. Solomons, who, I believe lives here in Hollywood, care to see these I shall be glad to show them to him. Incidently it might be interesting to give you some idea of what Hansen found in Chief Christian's rooms in his cabin there on the Chandalar—rather at Big Lake:—

A set of Encyclopedia Britannica, an Edison cabinet phonograph and records of grand opera, an immense square flat-topped oak desk, the code of laws of Alaska, and on the floor the finest Polar bear rug he had ever seen. Christian himself speaking excellent English and quoting from books on his shelves that Hansen himself had never read. All brought in by dog team from the trading stations and anchorages of the Whalers in the Arctic Ocean. Interesting, isn't it?—A.C.E.

* * *

A WORD from H. Bedford-Jones in connection with the place names used in his complete novelette in this issue:

The spelling of place names sometimes presents a problem. In these stories, which are largely placed in French colonial territory, I have followed French charts and spellings. This seems logical. Just as the French speak of London as "Londres," our maps speak of Comore or Anjuan as "Comoro" or "Johanna"—but why not give places their proper local names? So, to be consistent in all three stories, I have followed the French charts. In commenting upon "Son," I should say that Nosi Bé is not and never has had any connection with the Comores. It is six miles off the Madagascar coast and, like the northern portion of that island, has been occupied by the French since 1840, having been included in that cession. The Comores, ruled by native sultans, are a distinct and distant group—H. BEDFORD-JONES.

* * *

FROM Elmer Davis came a newspaper clipping. It cited the incident in the great war when a Lieutenant Pericard of the French army gave the order to attack, cried "Up! ye dead!" and saw a few figures get up from the ground to join the fighting. Also this incident among French troops in Morocco:

An advance in order was marred by one officer who rode far in advance of the others, accompanied by two black sergeants. Major Chartrane, angered by this breach of discipline, investigated and found that Lieutenant de Latour was dead and was being held upright by the two men. His company had loved him and wanted him to lead them even in death. They pleaded so hard that Major Chartrane let them have their way and saw them win out against heavy odds.

Mr. Davis's comment was: "It looks as if the French propaganda service owes Mr. Georges Surdez some money for second serial rights." In other words, had lifted the incident from Mr. Surdez' story, "The Figurehead," in our magazine. I sent the letter and clipping to Mr. Surdez and here is his reply:

I have received many clippings, in French and in English, all relating Lieutenant de Latour's spectacular finish. As far as I have been able to find out, de Latour is dead as a door nail, six feet underground in Ouezzan, Morocco, therefore the incident was carried a bit far, if propaganda. The episode was hailed by French reporters as new in Africa. In fact, I don't believe it appears in print anywhere, in fiction or official records. But any one who has talked with native troopers has heard several versions of it, located anywhere from Timbuktu to the Wadai, timed from 1855 to 1913. Even among white troops fighting in Europe I have read or heard of several cases closely resembling the episode I described in "The Figurehead," in Oct., '24, and which actually happened in June, '25.—GEORGES SURDEZ.

* * *

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: Full list in second issue of every other month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card; Forwarding Service; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

1. The Sea Part 1 American Waters

BERIAH BROWN, Coupeville, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (*See next section.*)

2. The Sea Part 2 British Waters

CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure.* Seamanship, navigation, old-time sailorizing, ocean-cruising, etc. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

3. The Sea Part 3 Statistics of American Shipping

HARRY E. RIESEBERG, Apartment 330 -A, Kew Gardens, Washington, D. C. Historical records. tonnages, names and former names, dimensions, services, power, class, rig, builders, present and past ownerships, signals, etc., of all vessels of the American Merchant Marine and Government vessels in existence over five gross tons in the United States, Panama and the Philippines, and the furnishing of information and records of vessels under American registry as far back as 1760.

4. Islands and Coasts Part 1 Islands of Indian and Atlantic Oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits

CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure.* Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*See next section.*)

5. Islands Part 2 Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups

CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Languages, mining, minerals, fishing, sugar, fruit and tobacco production.

6. Islands Part 3 Cuba

WALLACE MONTGOMERY, Warner Sugar Co. of Cuba, Miranda, Oriente, Cuba. Geography, industries, people, customs, hunting, fishing, history and government.

7. ★ New Zealand; and the South Sea Islands Part 1 Cook Islands, Samoa

TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

8. ★ South Sea Islands Part 2 French Oceania (Tahiti, the Society, Paumoto, Marquesas); Islands of Western Pacific (Solomons, New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga); of Central Pacific (Guam, Ladrone, Pelew, Caroline, Marshall, Gilbert, Ellice); of the Detached (Wallis, Penrhyn, Danger, Easter, Rotuma, Futuna, Pitcairn).

CHARLES BROWN, JR., Boite No. 167, Papeete, Tahiti, Society Islands, South Pacific Ocean. Inhabitants, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

9. ★ Australia and Tasmania

PHILLIP NORMAN, 842 Military Road, Mosman, Sydney, N. S. W., Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

★ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

10. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
FAY-COOPER COLE, Ph. D., Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions.

11. ★ New Guinea
L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, *via* Sydney, Australia. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions. Questions regarding the measures or policy of the Government or proceedings of Government officers not answered. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

12. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNOR, L. B. 4., Quartzsite, Ariz. History, inhabitants, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

13. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 1402 Lytton Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

14. Japan
(Editor to be appointed.)

15. Asia Part 1 Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Borneo
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

16. Asia Part 2 Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States and Yunnan
GORDON MACCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York. Hunting, trading, traveling, customs.

17. Asia Part 3 Coast of Northeastern Siberia, and Adjoining Waters
CAPT. C. L. OLIVER, care *Adventure*. Natives, language, mining, trading, customs, climate. Arctic Ocean: Winds, currents, depths, ice conditions, walrus-hunting.

18. ★ Asia Part 4 North China, Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan
GEORGE W. TWOMEY, M. D., 60 Rue de l'Amirauté, Tientsin, China. Natives, languages, trading, customs, climate and hunting. (*Send International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)

19. Africa Part 1 Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Southern and Northern Nigeria
(Editor to be appointed.)

20. ★ Africa Part 2 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, La Roseraie, Cap d'Ail (Alpes Maritimes), France. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport. (*Send International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)

21. Africa Part 3 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand
CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, Gulfport and Coast Enquiry Depot, Turnbull Bldg., Gulfport, Miss. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

22. ✠ Africa Part 4 Portuguese East
R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

23. Africa Part 5 Morocco
GEORGE E. HOLT, care *Adventure*. Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

24. Africa Part 6 Tripoli
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*. Including the Sahara Tuaregs and caravan routes. Traveling, exploring, customs, caravan trade.

25. Africa Part 7 Egypt, Tunis, Algeria
(Editor to be appointed.)

26. ✠ Africa Part 8 Sudan
W. T. MOFFAT, Opera House, Southport, Lancashire, England. Climate, prospects, trading, traveling, customs, history. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

27. Turkey
J. F. EDWARDS, David Lane, East Hampton, N. Y. Travel, history, geography, politics, races, languages, customs, commerce, outdoor life, general information.

28. Asia Minor
(Editor to be appointed.)

29. Bulgaria, Roumania
(Editor to be appointed.)

30. Albania
ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

31. Jugo-Slavia and Greece
LIEUT. WILLIAM JENNA, Fort Clayton, Panama, C. Z. History, politics, customs, geography, language, travel, outdoor life.

32. Scandinavia
ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

33. Finland, Lapland and Russia
ALEKO E. LILIUS, care *Adventure*. History, customs, travel, shooting, fishing, big game, camping, climate, sports, export and import, industries, geography, general information. In the case of Russia, political topics, outside of historical facts will not be discussed.

34. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
CAPT. FRED. F. FLEISCHER, care *Adventure*. History, politics, customs, languages, trade opportunities, travel, sports, out-door life.

35. ✠ Great Britain
THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., W. C. 2, London, England. General information. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

36. South America Part 1 Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

37. South America Part 2 Venezuela, the Guianas and Brazil
PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, 21 Claremont Ave., New York, N.Y. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, inhabitants, languages, hunting and fishing.

38. South America Part 3 Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care *Adventure*. Geography, travel, agriculture, cattle, timber, inhabitants, camping and exploration, general information. Questions regarding employment not answered.

39. Central America
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

40. Mexico Part 1 Northern
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, inhabitants, hunting, history, industries.

41. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California
C. R. MAHAFFEY, Box 304, San José, Calif. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

42. Mexico Part 3 Southeastern
W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Popular Ave., Takoma Park, Md., Federal Territory of Quintana Roo and states of Yucatan and Campeche. Inhabitants, history and customs; archeology, topography, travel and explorations; business conditions, exploitation of lumber, hemp, chewing gum and oil.

43. ✠ Canada Part 1 Height of Land, Region of Northern Quebec and Northern Ontario (except Strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber, customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

44. ✠ Canada Part 2 Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

45. ✠ Canada Part 3 Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario
A. D. L. ROBINSON, 115 Huron St., Walkerville, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing; farm locations, wild lands, national parks. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

46. Canada Part 4 Hunters Island and English River District
T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

47. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta
C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C. Climate, prospects, hunting, fishing and yachting.

48. ✠ Canada Part 6 Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin
REECE H. HAGUE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

★ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)
✠ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

49. ✠ Canada Part 7 Southeastern Quebec

Jas. F. B. Belford, Codrington, Ont., Canada. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

50. ★ Canada Part 8 Newfoundland

C. T. James, Bonaventure Ave., St. Johns, Newfoundland. Hunting, fishing, trapping, auto and canoe trips, topography; general information. (*Send International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)

51. Canada Part 9 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

Fred L. Bowden, 54 Mason Avenue, Binghamton, New York. Lumbering, hunting, fishing and trapping, auto and canoe trips, topography, farming and homesteading.

52. Alaska

Theodore S. Solomons, 5647 Lexington Ave., Hollywood, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

53. Baffinland and Greenland

Victor Shaw, Box 958, Ketchikan, Alaska. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

54. Western U. S. Part 1 Calif., Ore., Wash., Nev., Utah and Ariz.

E. E. Harriman, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

55. Western U. S. Part 2 New Mexico

H. F. Robinson, 200-202 Korber Block, Albuquerque, N. M. Agriculture, automobile routes, Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance; oil-fields; hunting, fishing, camping; history, early and modern.

56. Western U. S. Part 3 Colo. and Wyo.

Frank Earnest, Sugar Loaf, Colo. Agriculture, stock-raising, mining, game, fur-hunting, fishing, camping, outdoor life in general.

57. Western U. S. Part 4 Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains

Fred W. Egleston, Bozeman, Mont. Agriculture, mining, northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

58. Western U. S. Part 5 Idaho and Surrounding Country

R. T. Newman, Box 833, Anaconda, Mont. Camping, shooting, fishing, equipment, information on expeditions, history and inhabitants.

59. Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.

J. W. Whiteaker, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

60. Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.

Joseph Mills Hanson, care *Adventure*. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially early history of Missouri Valley.

61. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.

John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber.

62. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan

John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

63. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River

Geo. A. Zerr, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (*See section 64.*)

64. Middle Western U. S. Part 5 Great Lakes

H. C. Gardner, 3302 Daisy Ave., Cleveland, Ohio. Seamanship, navigation, courses and distances, reefs and shoals, lights and landmarks, charts; laws, fines, penalties; river navigation.

65. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Adirondacks, New York; Lower Miss. (St. Louis down), Atchafalaya across La. swamps, St. Francis River, Arkansas Bottoms, North and East Shores of Lake Mich.

Raymond S Spears, Inglewood, Calif. Transcontinental and other auto-trail tours (Lincoln, National, Old Santa Fé, Yellowstone, Red Ball, Old Spanish Trail, Dixie Highway, Ocean to Ocean, Pike's Peak); regional conditions, outfits, suggestions; skiff, outboard, small launch river and lake tripping and cruising; trapping; fresh water and button shelling; wildcraft, camping, nature study.

66. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers

Howard A. Shannon, care of *Adventure*. Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, eeling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia and Maryland.

67. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville

(Editor to be appointed.)

68. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Southern Appalachians

William R. Barbour, care *Adventure*. Alleghanies, Blue Ridge, Smokies, Cumberland Plateau, Highland Rim. Topography, climate, timber, hunting and fishing, automobiling, national forests, general information.

69. Eastern U. S. Part 5 Tenn., Ala., Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.

Hapsburg Liebe, care of *Adventure*. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

70. Eastern U. S. Part 6. Maine

Dr. G. E. Hathorne, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me. For all territory *west* of the Penobscot river. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

71. Eastern U. S. Part 7 Eastern Maine

H. B. Stanwood, East Sullivan, Me. For all territory *east* of the Penobscot River. Hunting, fishing, canoeing, mountaineering, guides; general information.

72, Eastern U. S. Part 8 Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., and Mass.

Howard R. Voight, 108 Hobart St., New Haven, Conn. Fishing, hunting, travel, roads; business conditions, history.

73. Eastern U. S. Part 9 New Jersey

(Editor to be appointed.)

74, Eastern U. S. Part 10 Maryland

Lawrence Edmund Allen, 201 Bowery Ave., Frostburg, Md. Mining, touring, summer resorts, historical places, general information.

A.—Radio

Donald McNicol, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

Victor Shaw, Box 958, Ketchikan, Alaska. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect, how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads—songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.—R. W. Gordon, care of *Adventure*.

D.—Weapons, Past and Present

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1.—All Shotguns, including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*.

2.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, including foreign and American makes. Donegan Wiggins, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800, Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. (Editor to be appointed.)

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Forestry in the United States

Ernest W. Shaw, South Carver, Mass. Big-game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild-animal life in the Forests.

G.—Tropical Forestry

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care *Adventure*. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

H.—Aviation

LIEUT.-COL. W. G. SCHAUFFLER, JR., 2940 Newark St., N. W., Washington, D. C. Airplanes; airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

I.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign

CAPT. FRED F. FLEISCHER, care *Adventure*, United States: Military history, military policy. National Defense Act of 1920. Regulations and matters in general for organized reserves. Army and uniform regulations, infantry drill regulations, field service regulations. Tables of organization. Citizens' military training camps. *Foreign:* Strength and distribution of foreign armies before the war. Uniforms. Strength of foreign armies up to date. History of armies of countries covered by Mr. Fleischer in general "Ask Adventure" section. *General:* Tactical questions on the late war. Detailed information on all operations during the late war from the viewpoint of the German high command. Questions regarding enlisted personnel and officers, except such as are published in Officers' Directory, can not be answered.

J.—Navy Matters

LIEUT. FRANCIS GREENE, U. S. N. R., 241 Eleventh Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery; tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers except such as contained in the Register of Officers can not be answered. International and constitutional law concerning Naval and maritime affairs.

K.-American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal

ARTHUR WOODWARD, Museum of American Indians, 155th St. and Broadway, N. Y. City. Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.

L.—First Aid on the Trail

CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Falls City, Neb. Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake-bite; industrial first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds. First-aid outfits. Meeting all health hazard, the outdoor life, arctic, temperate and tropical zones.

M.—Health-Building Outdoors

CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Falls City, Neb. How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel. Tropical hygiene. General health-building, safe exercise, right food and habits, with as much adaptation as possible to particular cases.

N.—Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada

R. T. NEWMAN, Box 833, Anaconda, Mont. General-office, especially immigration, work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk. General information.

O.—Herpetology

DR. G. K. NOBLE, American Museum of Natural History, 77th St., and Central Park West, New York, N. Y. General information concerning reptiles (snakes, lizards, turtles, crocodiles) and amphibians (frogs, toads, salamanders); their customs, habits and distribution.

P.—Entomology

DR. FRANK E. LUTZ, Ramsey, N. J. General information about insects and spiders; venomous insects, disease-carrying insects, insects attacking man, etc.; distribution.

Q.—STANDING INFORMATION

For **Camp-Fire Stations** write LAURENCE JORDAN, care *Adventure*.

For general information on **U. S. and its possessions** write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For **U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries**, the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the **Philippines, Porto Rico**, and customs receiverships in **Santo Domingo** and **Haiti**, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For **Alaska**, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For **Hawaii**, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For **Cuba**, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union for general information on **Latin-American matters** or for specific data. Address L. S. ROWE, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For **R. C. M. P.**, Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For **State Police of any State**, FRANCIS H. BENT, JR., care of *Adventure*.

For **Canal Zone**, the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C.

National **Rifle** Association of America, Brig. Gen. FRED H. PHILLIPS, JR., Sec'y, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States **Revolver** Ass'n. W. A. MORRALL, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National Parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Wash., D. C.

For whereabouts of **Navy men**, Bureau of Navigation, Navy Department, Wash., D. C.

National Park Service

YOU don't hear much about this work, which seems ideal for a man who likes the outdoors.

Request:—"As you are one of the 'A. A.' men I am writing to you for some information concerning the Northwest as I am planning a trip out there this coming spring as I think I would like to locate there. In order that you may judge better I will tell you about myself.

I am forty-five years of age, unmarried, well educated, have been teaching school since the war, in which I was in France, am not accustomed to hard work but do very much prefer the out of doors and small places rather than cities. Have been over all the U. S. except your State but know little of Ore. and Wash.

Have been teaching this winter in the wildwoods of W. Va. but it rains too blamed much in the winter. I think that is one trouble with western coast. Have done lots of camping and hiking, was a guide in the Estes Park region last summer, have always had the best of health.

I want to get into or near the mountains, don't want any of the desert like central Oregon. Would like to get a small chicken or fruit farm but want to work while I am looking around. What are the chances of a man like myself, with no business training, getting work either on a chicken ranch or anything similar? Also what chance is there for one without experience, getting hooked up with a lumber camp or steamship? Also is there a good auto route from Montana to Washington? I am afraid this is rather vague but will appreciate very much any information you may be able to give."—H. E. S., Hillsboro, W. Va.

Reply, by Mr. Edelston:—Should think the National Park service or National Forest service would hit you about right. Write the park service at Washington, D. C., for dope on jobs in Glacier and Yellowstone Parks. Also supervisors of tional forests at Bozeman, Helena, Great Falls, Missoula and Billings for prospects of getting on as fire-guard next season.

The Yellowstone trail passes through Montana to Spokane and the coast.

The only fruit raising is in the Bitter Root valley of which Missoula is the center. Write the county agent there for dope. There is also considerable lumbering in that section. The Anaconda Copper Co., at Butte, operates extensive lumber interests in western Montana also.

With the above dope you should be able to hook up next summer and this will give you an opportunity to locate something permanent.

Any other information I can give you will be cheerfully furnished.

The full statement of the sections in this department, as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

Bolivia

HOW to start a large ranch.

Request:—"In a recent issue I read with great interest your answers to question concerning Bolivia. A party of four of us have been contemplating on going to Argentina, but now as we have seen your article on Bolivia, it's more to our interest.

We are each putting up $1500 to be used to purchase what is needed for the time being. Do you think this fund of $6000 will get us anywhere? This does not include fare down there. As we have never tried any adventure of the sort, we do not want to take more money with us.

1. Can we have a grant of 400 or 500 acres of uncultivated land near Santa Cruz?

2. What will be needed in the way of farm tools if labor is so cheap?

3. If we go near or settle near Santa Cruz how far north must we ship our products by canoe?

4. If cattle are to be raised how many would you advise us to buy for a start? And at what price?

5. What do you advise us to take along in the way of clothes, kitchen utensils, hand tools, or can we buy the same there at the same price as up here?

6. We are all Protestants; has this any bearing against us?

7. By what way is the best way of going?

8. How much will it cost for the four of us on rail and water to Santa Cruz?

Any additional information or names of late books on Bolivia will be appreciated."—C. GUSTAFSON, Chicago, Ill.

"P. S.—We do not know a word of Spanish. Or can we get by just the same?"

Reply, by Mr. Edgar Young:—$6,000 is a whole lot of money if used in the right manner in the acquisition of land, buying farming tools, building houses, horses, cattle, etc., and getting a large ranch started in Bolivia. I say "in the right manner" for there is a lot to knowing the ropes, in getting the right sort of land before getting the government to make a grant of it and then in hanging onto the money until it is necessary to part with it. When you get down there and get to the thing first hand you will know what I mean.

As you do not now know the ropes the next best thing is to get Americans—or Englishmen, Canadians, Australians, Swedes, and other like people—to help you with the project. Down there you will find any of them willing to go all the way to help you get located. These people already know the ropes and if you find the right ones among them to tie to all will be easy. The foreigners down there are the right sort, men, and there are very few gyppers and crooks among them. They are mine owners, workers at the mines, storekeepers, consuls, etc., and they are a friendly lot.

Some of them will know the exact spot and the exact people you will have to see among the government people to get a good big grant of land for little or no money. Let them know you are down there to get plenty of land and that you will be able to induce other people to come after you get located.

1. Yes and a darned sight more than that if you go about it right; 40,000; 50,000; 100,000 acres.

2. Primitive tools that you can purchase locally will do. The native people are strong on machetes to slash brush with. We call them brush knives up here. The axes they use have a round handle and I think are made in Germany. I found it hard to get people of this sort used to our sort of axes. Long-handled shovels, mattocks, two-man rip-saws; these are about all they now know how to use. They can be taught to use others. They are not very strong on plowing, using a half-grown tree with one limb sharpened for a plow and plowing with oxen. Plows should be imported from here and there are no plows in the world as good as ours.

3. All the way to the Amazon. The way this is done is by canoe trains. Two or three planters arrange to make a trip a couple of times a year and take quite a number of large dugouts each. They bring back goods and farm utensils on the return. There are always trusted Indians who can manage this trip as foreman for you.

4. After you get located fifty cows and five bulls should start you going. The price depends on where you buy. You can buy at one price down in the Chaco and another over in Paraguay and another among the planters who fringe the highlands. The beef and hides are worth the money down on the Amazon and over in the mining country and you should be able to buy locally for 10 to 15 U. S. money per head, more or less depending.

5. You can buy down there just as well as here. Buy in the city or big town you outfit from and save yourself the trouble of packing it along.

6. No, the fact that you are Protestants will not militate against you. In fact, the natives expect an American to be a Protestant. One of their own sort, though, who is a Protestant finds himself in lots of hot arguments. The priests are big men down there all over Bolivia. I have palled in with several and found them very fine fellows who liked to make friends with men not of their belief.

7. Best way for you is to New Orleans by train and then buy direct passage either from the United Fruit, Panama R. R. S. S. Co., or any of the other lines sailing to or through the Panama Canal. There is a port in Peru and one in Chili that has a railroad running up to Bolivia. I made the trip up from Mollendo, Peru, and the other railroad has been completed since my time down there so I don't know the fares. If you will write the Pan American Union, Washington, D. C., they will be able to tell you the exact fares from the coast up. Also ask

them to send you their booklet "Bolivia". I don't believe you can buy second-class tickets from New Orleans to Panama but you can buy second from there at a considerable saving. Buy a hammock and ride deck passage south. In this manner you can possibly make the trip from New Orleans to Santa Cruz for around $200. It's a long ways down there.

Read the article in the Encyclopedia Britannica under heading *Bolivia* at your public library. C. R. Enoch has written some good books concerning Bolivia that you can possibly read at Chicago public library also. Consult the card index at the main library and you will find a score of good books. Rand McNally's Atlas map gives an idea of the country. Steiller's Atlas is better and the London *Times* Atlas is as good as Steiller's if you can find it in the library.

Spiders

A WIDOW with a bad reputation.

Request:—"Through the offices of "Ask Adventure" I avail myself of your courtesy in answering the following:

Are there any insects or spiders in the mountains of Maryland, southern Pennsylvania and northern West Virginia having bite dangerous to—or which will effect the health of—man?

Will you please give me names and general description of any such as well as information and comments on their likelihood to attack man?

Thank you in advance for your courtesy in answering. (Please use initials only if published.)"—F. B. S., Detroit, Mich.

Reply, by Dr. Lutz:—All spiders are poisonous. That is how they kill their prey. However, man is not their prey and, so, few spiders try to use their poison on him. Furthermore, most spiders have so little poison that not much harm would be done if they did try. There is in the region you mention a spider that is said to have caused some people serious trouble by its bite. It is sometimes as much as half an inch long; black with bright red markings, especially underneath; and is found among loose stones, on plants, or in houses. Some people call it "Black Widow." Its scientific name is *Latrodectus mactans*. Personally, I think that its reputation for being dangerous arose simply because it is marked with red but I would not care to test my opinion by actual experiment. However, I have handled many different kinds of spiders, both in the United States and in the Tropics, with my bare hands and have never been even bitten. Furthermore, in my rather wide experience, I have not been able to find any one who had been seriously hurt by spiders. The stories have always been third or fourth hand.

Accompany your inquiry with stamped, self-addressed envelop.

"ASK ADVENTURE" editors are appointed with extreme care. If you can meet our exacting requirements and qualify as an expert on some topic or territory not now covered, we shall be glad to talk matters over with you. Address JOSEPH Cox, *Adventure*, New York.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible*. All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

◆

WHEELER, EDWARD. Last heard from about four years. Would like to hear from you. Write me at following address. Your Brother—Address THURSTON WHEELER, care of Mammoth Ice Company, Long Branch, New Jersey.

"LEWIS ROBERTS, FRANK ROBERTS" by writing MRS. J. V. VAN DUYNE, Spokane, Wash., care of Dr. Roberta L. Ripple, 400 Hutton Bldg., you will receive a glad letter from your mother.

MARCUS R. Dreadfully missed, at least, let me know that you are quite well. Dad left for India, urgent. Phone Mother at the office, to stop this awful waste of money, as I would rather you had same instead. Need your help. EDDIE R.

SORENSEN, W. N. Please write *Adventure* for letters, also write home. Please write Mamma, same address as always. MAMMA.

ANY ONE who knows where Mr. William B. Denney is, please send word to JOHN MITCHELL, Effort, Pa., his home is in Norfolk, Neb., and I would like to hear from him.

BRUEN or BRUHN. Two brothers last heard of in Oskosh, Wis. Believed to have left there for Australia about 25 or 30 years ago. Any information will be appreciated. Address F. F. BIXLER, Waterloo, Indiana.

FOX or FOXE, JIMMIE. Alias "Frisco Jimmie." Last heard of at Anthony, Kansas. Went through the 1922 Harvest with Howard Curran, Alias "Panama." Also an ex-T. T. T. Shipmate of mine at Panama City, and Coco Sola, C. Z. Has an uncle on the M. K. & T. (*Katy R. R.*) somewhere in Indiana. Write me in care of this magazine as soon as possible. Am anxious to hear from you. P. H. G.

HOWARD, GEORGE. We are so sorry for you. We are waiting for a word from you. There is nothing to forgive—the blame is not yours.—RUFUS.

BRANAN, VIRGIL, C. or CAL. Last heard of Oct. 1924 as he left for European destinations aboard the *S. S. Fluor Spar* as second engineer. He was once junior engineer on *S. S. J. E. O'Neill*, operated by the Atlantic Refining Co., of Philadelphia. Any information will be appreciated by his brother.—Address HERBERT L. BRANAN, Box 288, Muskogee, Okla.

MURPHY, TIMOTHY. Born in Glens Falls, New York. Age 24 years. Worked on the Great Lakes during 1919. Last heard from in 1920, when he was employed on a ranch in Burkeburnett, Texas. Had an American flag with initial T. M. tattooed on his arm. Any information will be appreciated.—Address MRS. JULIA MURPHY, 39 Geer St., Glens Falls, New York.

EASLEY, JAMES LESLEY. Son of Mrs. Sally Easley, of Millery, Washington County, Alabama. Age 37 years, gray eyes, blond hair and high forehead. Last heard of he was a disabled soldier in a hospital at Columbus, Ohio, at which place he was discharged from the service. Any information will be appreciated.—Address MRS. V. L. ADAMS, care of Louisville & Nashville Freight Office, Birmingham, Alabama.

CRAWFORD, R. D. Formerly of Pioneer, Texas. Time has proven what you told me to be true. I want to be again your friend. Please write.—Address "BLACKIE" STELL, care of *Adventure*.

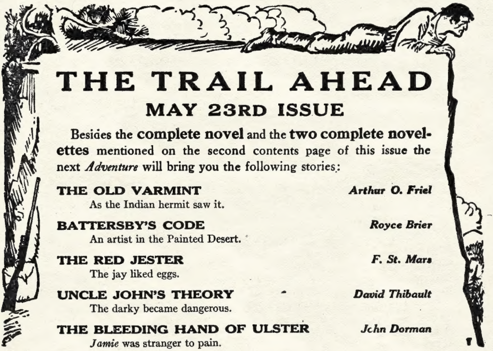
SHAW, JOHN (Gock). Formerly of Oakland, Calif. Please write your sister Ethel.—Address ETHEL SHAW DRUMHEISER, 617 Packer St., Shamokin, Pa.

THE following will be inquired for in either the March 20th or April 8th, 1926 issues of Adventure. They can get the name and address of the inquirer from this magazine.

ALEXANDER, Tressa; Behrant, Henry; Booth, Walter; Breeden, Ernest G.; Brenton, Jack W.; Chapman, Walter S.; Coe, Noah; Conniston, Art; Constantine, Richard B.; Deacon, Hoke; Dollar, James Eddie; Donnely, Frank P; Fitzgerald, William Patrick; Fowler, B. A.; Friends; Friend of Spook; Greer, Frank A.; Grubbs, Ernest C.; Haas or Sylvest, George H.; Keeley, John; Keener, E. Kirby; Mackenzie, Marie; Marcranna, Alfred A.; McGee, Clem Le-Roy; Monnet, Richard J.; Moore, Ted; Schroeder, Lawrence Charles; "Servatius," Frank Servatius; Sklepik, Vincent; Wahl, Albert; Wenger, Herbert; Wilo, M.; Wooddell, Charles.

UNCLAIMED MAIL

TED MOORE, William Neil Sorensen, Ethel Schoals.



THE TRAIL AHEAD

MAY 23RD ISSUE

Besides the **complete novel** and the **two complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

THE OLD VARMINT — *Arthur O. Friel*
As the Indian hermit saw it.

BATTERSBY'S CODE — *Royce Brier*
An artist in the Painted Desert.

THE RED JESTER — *F. St. Mars*
The jay liked eggs.

UNCLE JOHN'S THEORY — *David Thibault*
The darky became dangerous.

THE BLEEDING HAND OF ULSTER — *John Dorman*
Jamie was stranger to pain.

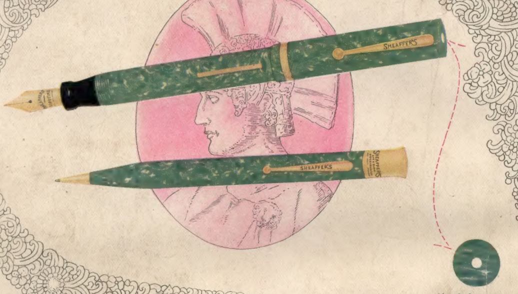
STILL
FARTHER
AHEAD

THE TWO ISSUES following the next will contain *long* stories by Talbot Mundy, Captain Raabe, Harold Lamb, William P. Barron, Norman Springer, Leslie McFarlane and Leonard H. Nason; and short stories by F. R. Buckley, Bruce Johns, F. St. Mars, Leo Walmsley, Post Sargent, Albert Richard Wetjen, Fiswoode Tarleton and others; stories of daring men in dangerous places up and down the earth.

Keep a Kodak story of the children

Autographic Kodaks, $5 up

Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, N.Y., *The Kodak City*



Identify the aristocrat
of pens by this
white dot

Here's why we guarantee this fountain pen for a lifetime

The fine old craftsmen who used to cut the exquisite cameos which we are now proud to hand down as heirlooms, were inspired by exactly the same spirit that goes into the making of this remarkable pen. It is the product of infinite pains. And as such it is an infallible performer, and a thing of real beauty. Like its twin, the Titan pencil, it is made of Radite, a new jewel-like material of handsome jade-green, that is practically indestructible. And that is why it can be guaranteed, without condition, for a lifetime. Its first cost is its last cost—always.

"Lifetime" pen, $8.75—pencil, $4.25—Lady "Lifetime," $7.50—guaranteed

At better stores everywhere

SHEAFFER'S
PENS · PENCILS · SKRIP

W. A. SHEAFFER PEN COMPANY
FORT MADISON, IOWA